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of

Literary Essays

1896–1916

By

WALTER RALEIGH

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NOTE

SIR WALTER RALEIGH at various times entertained the idea of gathering some of his occasional essays, and particularly those which had become obscure by being buried in old periodicals or in large and costly editions. But he did not make a final choice, and the scope of the book remained in doubt until first the War, and then its History, withdrew his interest from literary and academic themes.

He left, however, a number of lists, of various dates; and the title *Some Authors*, which was his own, described the contents of some of these lists. The composition of this volume has been determined by a comparison of these lists and by the wish to bring together all his essays in literary criticism that are difficult of access or scattered in divers editions. If to his *English Novel*, *Stevenson*, *Style*, *Milton*, *Wordsworth*, *Shakespeare*, *Johnson*, and *Romance*, the present volume be

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added, the tale of his published work in this field will be virtually complete.

Permission to reprint has been given by The English Review Ltd. (for *Boccaccio*), The Times Publishing Company (*Don Quixote*), Philip Nutt, Esq. (*Hoby*), Messrs. Heinemann (*Harington*, *Whistler*), T. Fisher Unwin, Esq. (*The Battle of the Books*), H. Young and Sons (*Burns*), George Bell and Sons (*Shelley*), Messrs. Gowans and Gray (*Arnold*).

Nothing has been included that the author did not himself publish, except the essays on *Dryden and Political Satire* and on *Burke*, of which it is known that he contemplated the publication.

The manuscript of the last piece was recovered when the rest of this volume was in print, and it therefore appears out of its natural sequence. The manuscript, unlike that of *Dryden*, lacks the author's final touches, and it was never revised for the press. Some few additions, roughly indicated in the margin, are here of necessity ignored.

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BOCCACCIO[1]

We know hardly anything of the intimate life of Boccaccio except what he has told us, and almost all that he has told us is presented to us under the guise of fiction. Was he speaking of himself? Here enter the two eternal schools of literary criticism with their tedious controversy. The early romances and poems of Boccaccio—the *Filocolo*, the *Filostrato*, the *Teseide*, the *Ameto*, the *Amorosa Visione*, the *Fiammetta*, the *Ninfale Fiesolano*—are all romances, poems, and allegories dealing with love; all point to a love-affair which reaches the summit of happiness and is then broken by desertion and separation. There was only one love-story, it seems, which interested Boccaccio; what wonder if it was his own? And his own, so far as we have independent knowledge of it, corresponds with the love-story of the romances and poems. The *Filostrato*, in its dedication to Fiammetta, asserts the identity:

'You are gone suddenly to Samnium, and . . . I have sought in the old histories what personage I might choose as messenger of my secret and unhappy love, and have found Troilus, son of Priam, who loved Cressida. His miseries are my history. I have sung them in light rhymes and in my own Tuscan, and so when you read the lamentations of Troilus and his sorrow at the departure of his love, you shall know my tears, my sighs, my agonies; and if I vaunt the beauties and the charms of Cressida, you will know that I dream of yours.'

Yet in these same works Boccaccio was inventing the various literary art-forms which he bequeathed to

[1] Reprinted from *The English Review*, 1913, pp. 209–29.

Originally one of a series of lectures planned by Raleigh and delivered at Oxford in Hilary Term, 1913. The other lectures in the series were: Petrarch, by the late C. D. Fisher; Erasmus, by P. S. Allen; Rabelais, by H. Belloc; Montaigne, by C. Whibley.

Europe. The *Filocolo* is a prose romance after the French fashion. The *Filostrato* and the *Teseide* are epics of love (*Troilus and Cressida* and *The Knight's Tale*) written in the *ottava rima*; the *Ameto* is a pastoral in prose and verse; the *Amorosa Visione* is a poem in *terza rima*; the *Fiammetta* is a psychological novel. In all that he does, Boccaccio shows the way to modern literature.

In his later life he was infected by the habits of the learned, and produced heavy compilations in Latin, encouraged thereto by his friend Petrarch. The *De Claris Mulieribus*, the *De Casibus Illustrium Virorum*, the *De Genealogiis Deorum*, the *De Montibus, Silvis, Lacubus, Fluminibus*, &c., were dictionaries of themes, mythological and geographical encyclopaedias. They remind us how great a part of the business of the Renaissance was concerned with knowledge rather than art. Their influence has been enormous. The Legends of Good Women, the Falls of Princes, the Mirrors for Magistrates, the whole mythological apparatus of poetry—all have Boccaccio for a chief source. Indeed, his dull Latin works were in some ways more influential than his perfect Italian poems. They supplied poets with raw material.

Between these two groups of works there falls a greater thing than either: the hundred tales called the *Decameron*. If all the rest were lost and forgotten, we should lose many beautiful things, but the reputation of Boccaccio would be no lower than it is. I shall speak only of the *Decameron* and of its author. I believe that English readers sometimes find it difficult to understand how it is that the *Decameron* has placed its author in the highest seat along with the few great creators of modern literature. It is well to confront this difficulty at once, so that we may not take our own prejudices, and limitations, and modern conventions of sentiment as a measure of a wider world. Our

taste must always be, more or less, the victim of our limitations, but we should beware of glorying in it, and, above all, we should beware of mistaking the aversions of timidity and sensibility for critical judgments.

Why has this writer of vain, light tales become an immortal? His success is not a success of scandal. Other writers have been as gay as he was, and less decent; yet they have gone down to the pit. What is his secret?

I must speak at large of the *Decameron*, but here, and at first, I will try to answer this question. The secret of Boccaccio is no hidden talisman; it is the secret of air and light. A brilliant sunshine inundates and glorifies his tales. The scene in which they are laid is as wide and well-ventilated as the world. The spirit which inspires them is an absolute humanity, unashamed and unafraid. He is willing to pass his time and cast in his lot with the brotherhood of men, whether they be in rags or fine linen. He is no lone thinker, living in those dark and fantastic recesses of the soul where ideas are generated. As soon as you open his book you are out of doors, subject to all the surprising chances of the world, blown upon by the wind and rain, carried hither and thither in our crowded life, to drinking parties and secret assignations and funerals. Shocked you may be, and incommoded by the diversity of your experience, but you are never melancholy and never outcast. The world, which is the touchstone of sanity, is always with you. Indeed, Boccaccio might be called the escape from Dante. The dreamer awakes, and tastes the air, and sees the colours of life, and feels the delight of moving his limbs. He is among men and women. He has touched ground after his dizzy flight of the spirit; he has come out of the prison-house of theological system, nobly and grimly architected, and is abroad

again in the homely disorder of our familiar world. Small blame to him if he laughs.

The divine power, the highest wisdom, and the primal love made Hell, says Dante, very profoundly. But the world, which was also made by God, is a lighter thing, with less of the symmetry of an institution. It is like one of those suddenly conceived works (and this view has the warrant of orthodoxy) which are thrown off by the artist in happy moments of careless inspiration. Those who enter Hell, says Dante, must abandon hope. But the world is made of hope; and the *Decameron* is a portrait of the world.

There is more than this sense of relief from system in the *Decameron*. The world is wide; and its width supplies a kind of profundity in another dimension. In a confined place life can raise itself and be high; in a low-lying plain it can extend itself and be broad. The *Decameron* is so generous in its breadth, and so various, that no criticism from without is needed: it criticizes itself. Experience cannot be criticized by our idea of what experience ought to be like; it can be criticized only by more experience. This is what is called the irony of life, which, in its literary reflection, is found in all the best drama. Life criticizes itself. If any one of us desires to have a criticism of his own way of life, he will not find anything of worth in the ideas of a secluded student, who often enough is willing to tell his opinion of what such a life ought to be. When the secluded student is a passionate and eloquent creature, like Ruskin, his ideas often produce a great effect, and a whole generation of the weaker sort endeavours to conform itself, not to circumstances or the pressure of experience, but to the sentiments of a revered teacher. But this is only an echo, a prolongation of the murmur of applause that greeted the voice, and it soon dies. The life of, say, a professor or a resident fellow of a college is to be effectively

criticized not by the ideas of another professor or another fellow of a college, but by the mere juxtaposition of other dissimilar lives—the life, say, of a soldier or a brewer's drayman. Boccaccio describes so many kinds of lives that each of them is seen in relation to all humanity; and this is the truest criticism; it gives the right perspective. He knows that the event of human actions is manifold and incomprehensible; he is very humble and very humane; so he accepts things as they are, and shows how dire effects spring from trivial causes, how a gay beginning may have a disgraceful and lamentable ending, and how a disgraceful beginning may be turned by the whim of Fate to laughter and ease. This is what is called the mixture of tragic and comic effects.

The best of Boccaccio's stories are so entirely like life that the strongest of the emotions awakened in the reader is not sympathy or antipathy, not moral approval or moral indignation, but a more primitive passion than these—the passion of curiosity. We want to see what happens. This is the passion of all watchers of life who are not pedantic or foolish. They know only that they are sure to be surprised. Life is an infinitely subtle game, delightful to watch, giving glimpses here and there of the underlying causes of things, luring on the gamesters who believe they have discovered a winning system, fortifying them in their folly by granting them a short run of luck, and then, by a turn of the wheel, overthrowing and mocking their calculations. The interest of the game and the joy of its uncertainty give millions of readers to the daily newspapers. Indeed, to suppress the gambling news, you would have to suppress the news. The same interest gave a large public also to Boccaccio and the novelists, his followers. Here is set down a lively record of the miseries and happiness that have fallen to the lot of those who lived before us. In the

world we see only scraps and fragments of the lives of others; in the book we may see the whole extent of the good and bad fortune that falls to man in this life. Often there is a moral, clear enough; flightiness and folly are seen to work their own punishment. But not always; and the moral is a very small part of the story; Boccaccio cares very little about it; he knows only that pleasure and sorrow chase each other across the sky, that no one can be sure to escape from suffering some of the bitterest and most awful of life's chances except by escaping from life itself; and life is what he loves.

I must sketch his own life briefly; and, in order to be brief, I must avoid all those controversies with which the narrative has been honeycombed. One misfortune which attends the growth of universities is that learned debates and investigations on the incidents of the life of a great man are carried on by trained bores, whom no one would dream of trusting to give judgment on any incident in the life of any one who is still alive. Yet they publish papers, and their papers are quoted by others, so that the outlines of the record are in a fair way to be snowed under by masses of learned deposit. I shall state only the conclusions and inferences which I accept. They have not been disproved, and they correspond in the main with what I may call the traditional life of Boccaccio.

Giovanni Boccaccio (long ago naturalized in England by the name of John Boccace) was born in Paris in 1313. His father was a Florentine of humble birth, who achieved importance as a banker and moneylender. His mother's name was Jeanne, and she was a Frenchwoman. She was deserted by the elder Boccaccio, who returned to Florence and took another to wife. Boccaccio was sent to Florence in infancy or childhood, and passed his early time with his father and stepmother. He was not preoccupied with books or

studies in these years. Indeed, the impulse to literature came to him at Naples from the life of the city and of the Court of King Robert. He was intended by his father for business, but he showed no aptitude for it, and (his home being perhaps an unhappy place for a stepchild) he was sent to business in Naples, and later on was put to learn the Canon Law as a means of livelihood. 'Naples', he says, 'was gay, peaceful, rich, and splendid above any other Italian city, full of festas, games, and shows.' In this city, for six years of his youth, he 'did nothing but waste irrecoverable time'. By wasting time he means attending intermittently to business and to the study of the Canon Law. He began to know what he wanted, and to think only of poetry as a profession.

It was probably in 1336, on the Vigil of Easter, in the Church of S. Lorenzo of the Franciscans, that he first saw Fiammetta, the lady 'who was ordained to rule my mind, and who was promised me in my dreams'. Her name was Maria D'Aquino, and she was the natural daughter of King Robert of Naples. She had been married at fifteen, and was famous for her beauty; in short, she was what would have been called in Queen Anne's time 'a reigning toast'. The scene in the church has been very exactly described by Boccaccio, and very exactly rendered or adapted by Chaucer in *Troilus and Cressida*. But Chaucer's Cressida is more modest and domestic than her original. Fiammetta had that shining, glittering beauty, those flashing eyes and bright red lips, delicately moulded like Cupid's bow, which, if the world is right, often indicate a cruel and sensual temper. The rest of Boccaccio's love-story is made up of a period of wooing, a short intoxication of complete happiness, and then betrayal and despair. In 1338 Fiammetta left Naples for Baia, and forbade him to follow her. By her excuses and her shifts

to put him off, he gradually divined the truth. He was in a transport of rage and tenderness, jealousy and grief. At the same time he learned that his father was ruined, and he returned in 1340 to Florence and poverty.

The map of a lover's mind which Boccaccio has given us in the *Filostrato* is one of the truest and closest studies in all literature. Here is one passage, translated almost literally by Chaucer:

> Fro thennisforth he rideth up and doun,
> And everything com him to remembraunce
> As he rod for-by places of the toun
> In which he whilom had al his plesaunce,
> 'Lo, yonder saw I last my lady daunce!
> And in that templè with her eyen clere
> Me caughte first my righte lady dere!'

This is an extract from the love-story, not of Chaucer, but of Boccaccio. And the later history of Boccaccio is contained in the lines that follow:

> Than thoughte he thus: 'O blisful Lord Cupide,
> Whan I the proces have in my memorie,
> How thou me hast werrey'd on every side,
> Men mighte a book make of it, lik a storie.'

Boccaccio made many books of it, and within a few years a name for himself.

The rest of his life was taken up with his unceasing labours in literature, varied by ambassadorial work for the Republic of Florence. In 1348 the great plague, or Black Death, desolated Italy. Fiammetta died of it in Naples; at the same time Boccaccio's father died in Florence, and he was alone in the world. The description of the plague which he has prefixed to the *Decameron* is perhaps the most vivid historical document of that century. We can see the streets of Florence as they were, the disorderly burials, and the mad pleasures, for, as Bacon remarks in his essay *Of Love*, 'perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures'.

There is something more than artistic cunning in that choice of a marvellous black background for the sunshine, mirth and ease of the tales in the garden. It is consummate art; how pathetic and frail and brilliant the life of this world is seen to be when it is silhouetted against the bulk of death! But in Boccaccio's own life-history the plague was like a dark band across the very middle of its course. Everything was changed. He survived, a comparatively old man for his thirty-six years, deeply seen in suffering, disillusioned but not embittered, somewhat aloof from life, a quick observer, a lover of fair and noble things, above all a lover of that comedy which may be seen almost everywhere in human life by the eye of a dispassionate spectator, that comedy which is the best febrifuge, or specific against mania. He completed the *Decameron* in the space of some five years, by the time he was forty; from that time onwards his life ran another course. He first met Petrarch in Florence when Petrarch was on his way to Rome in connection with the public thanksgiving for the lifting of the plague, and his friendship with Petrarch fills the last twenty-five years of his life to his death in 1375. It was a happy and honourable friendship, a great resource to both men, and a means of developing what was most amiable in both their characters. But literature owes nothing to it on Boccaccio's account. I have praised the *Decameron*; I ought perhaps to quote what Petrarch thought of it. Writing to Boccaccio in 1374, about a month before he died, Petrarch says: 'The book you have composed in our maternal tongue, probably during your youth, has fallen into my hands, I do not know by what chance. I have seen it, but if I should say I had read it, I should lie. The work is very long, and it is written for the vulgar —that is to say, in prose. Besides, I have been overwhelmed with occupations.' Boccaccio was younger

than Petrarch by nine years, and was a poor scholar in comparison; he was content to regard his own talent as an inferior vernacular thing, not to be mentioned in the same day as the niceties and severities of classical scholarship; so he put himself to school to Petrarch, who did not refuse the office of tutor. The greatest novelist of the modern world was taken in hand by a scholar, and in conformity with academic usage was made to pursue researches into the genealogy of the ancient gods. Boccaccio was quite simple and modest in regard to himself; he knew that some of his stories had been censured by grave and learned persons; he was advised to undertake work of a more exalted kind (namely, the investigation of the genealogy of the ancient gods), he cheerfully submitted to the discipline of his superiors, and breathed no word of protest. During these years the man of letters was dead, but the penman, who yet lived, an industrious ghost, went on writing his weary posthumous works. Ghosts are notorious for the dullness of their literary output, and this, the ghost of Boccaccio, was no exception to the rule. Here and there, but not often, nor for long, there is a gleam of the old splendour, a flush of the old warmth and geniality. It has been said that the periods of Italian literature during which the influence of Petrarch was strongest are the weakest periods of Italian literature. The life-history of Boccaccio throws some light on this statement.

One other event must be mentioned. In 1373 the city of Florence founded a Dante Chair, and appointed Boccaccio as the first holder. He produced a *Life of Dante*, and a Commentary on part of the *Inferno*. So Boccaccio was the first Professor of Modern Literature, and incomparably the most distinguished writer who ever took up with that uneasy trade.

The sources of Boccaccio's stories have been carefully investigated and catalogued. But this investiga-

tion does not belong to the study of Boccaccio, for he did not know the sources of his stories. He picked them up where he found them—the greater part, perhaps, in conversation. A man who buys wares and trinkets from a travelling pedlar does not generally concern himself much with the trade routes of Europe. But it is possible to make a rough classification of the stories—or of the plots, for the manner of telling them is Boccaccio's own. About a third of them are found among the *fabliaux* of the lower kind of minstrels in Northern France. Another group contains moral apologues, Oriental in origin and essence, but scattered through many countries. Last, and most important, there are the stories founded on real incidents of Italian life, some of them belonging to his own time. These are what I may call the newspaper stories; they have this enormous advantage over the others, that they were not invented to illustrate a moral lesson or to indulge a lewd fantasy; they are merely true. The *Hundred Merry Tales*, the *Seven Wise Masters*: these are famous examples of two kinds of popular anecdotes—the anecdotes of the tavern and of the pulpit. The one kind is commonly as extravagant as the other. Both are enormously popular, for they write their lessons large. The coarse jest is quite clear and intelligible; the moral parable is seldom elusive or subtle. But the truth of life is a much more delicate affair; it cannot be advertised on hoardings or sandwich-boards. By far the most precious of Boccaccio's bequests are those stories which tell us what actually happened during his own time, or not long before, in Italy and the Mediterranean. These set the standard; and the strange thing is that he is not satisfied with the wooden framework of the other stories, he tries to make them lifelike too, so that the most elaborate art of modern portraiture is applied to traditional indecencies and traditional

moralities. Punch and Judy come to life. Let me take one instance—the first story in the *Decameron*; it will serve as well as another. The first story of the first day gives a notable example of hypocrisy; the last story of the last day, the famous story of Griselda, celebrates the virtue of patience. Both are raised to a height almost heroic, and yet both are almost brought to the likeness of humanity.

The hypocrite of the first story was a certain notary or small lawyer of Paris, called Master Chappelet du Prat. He held it in high disdain that any of his contracts should be found without falsehood. He bore false witness, when he was thereto entreated, as if it were the only pleasure in the world; and often when he was not entreated at all. He made no care or conscience to be perjured, and thereby won many lawsuits. He delighted to cause enmities and scandals between kindred and friends. If he were called upon to kill any one, he would go to it very willingly. He was a horrible blasphemer of God and His Saints. He basely contemned the Church and counted religion a vile and unprofitable thing, but he would very joyfully visit taverns and places of dishonest repute. He would steal both in public and private, as if it were a gift of nature. He was a great glutton and drunkard, also a confirmed gamester; and carried false dice, to cheat with them the very best friends he had.

'Why do I waste time', says the narrator, 'in adding many words? To be brief: there never was a worse man born.'

This lawyer was employed by a certain rich merchant in France, who, having to recover debts from the Burgundians, themselves versed in every deceit, chose Chappelet as a fit instrument. In the course of his collector's labours, Chappelet lodged in Dijon with two Florentine brothers, moneylenders, and there fell ill, so that the doctors despaired of his life.

And now Boccaccio begins to get to work. He lets you feel the anxiety of the two brothers and overhear their whispered conversations. What are they to do? We lodged him, they say, when he was well; to turn him out now that he is mortally sick will do us no credit. On the other hand, he has notoriously been a bad man; he probably will not make any confession nor take the sacrament; no Church will receive his body; he will have to be buried like a dog. Even if he were to confess, no priest would dare to absolve him from his many and monstrous sins. So he will die, and must be cast into some ditch, and the people of the town, who already do not like us, will mutiny against us, and say, 'Why should we suffer these Lombard dogs, whom the Church rejects, to live among us?' Perhaps the people will attack our house and rob our goods, and our lives will be in danger. What are we to do?

Now Master Chappelet lay in a neighbouring room, and had quick ears. He called the brothers to him and promised them that they should suffer no inconvenience on his account. 'Only send me', he said, 'the most holy and religious man that you can find, and I will take care of the rest.' So they sent to him an aged, devout Friar, a master of the Holy Scriptures, a very venerable person, of a sanctified life. The Friar spoke words of comfort to him and asked how often he had been at confession. Master Chappelet (who had never been at confession in his life) replied, 'Holy Father, I commonly go to confession once a week, sometimes much oftener, but it is true that eight days have now passed since I was confessed, so violent has been the extremity of my weakness.' 'My son,' said the good old man, 'you have done well; and since you have so often confessed youself, I shall have the less labour in asking you questions.'

'O good Father,' said Chappelet, 'do not talk like

that; although I have been often confessed, I desire now to make a general confession of all the sins that come to my remembrance, from the very day of my birth to this present hour. I entreat you, holy Father, to question me closely, as if I had never been confessed before. And take no account of my sickness, for I had rather offend against my carnal welfare than hazard the perdition of my soul.'

So the Friar questions him, and Master Chappelet makes his marvellous confession. I take some extracts, using, for the most part, the spirited English version of 1620.

He confesses that he has been guilty of the sin of gluttony, for he has drunk water with too great relish, and has eaten salad with more pleasure than agrees with the nature of fasting. The Friar says that these sins are natural, and very light. 'O sir,' says Master Chappelet, 'never tell me this to comfort me, for well you know, and I am not ignorant, that such things as are done for the service of God ought all to be performed purely, and without any blemish of the mind.'

This is a promising beginning, and Master Chappelet soon improves upon it. Asked whether he has often been angry, 'O sir,' says he, 'therein I assure you I have often sinned. Alas! what man is able to forbear it, beholding the daily actions of men to be so dishonest? Many times in a day I have rather wished myself dead than living, beholding youth pursuing idle vanities, to swear and forswear themselves, tippling in taverns, and never haunting churches, but rather affecting the world's follies than any such duties as they owe to God.' 'This is a good and holy anger,' said the Friar; 'but, tell me, hath not rage or fury at any time so overruled thee as to commit murder or manslaughter, or to speak evil of any man, or to do any other such kind of injury?' 'O

Father,' answered Master Chappelet, 'you that seem to be a man of God, how dare you use such vile words? If I had had the least thought to do any such act, do you think God would have suffered me to live? Those are deeds of darkness, fit for villains and wicked livers; when at any time I have met with one of them, I have said, "Go, God amend thee."'

And so he carries on, confessing kind and good actions under the guise of sins. He has spoken ill of another, for when he saw a man continually beat his wife he complained to the man's parents. He has cheated in merchandise, for once a man brought him money in a purse, and it was found later that there was fourpence too much, so Master Chappelet gave it to the poor. And once, when he was a very little boy, he cursed his mother, which now gives him occasion for an anguish of filial devotion. So, in the end, the holy man absolves him, and adds his own benediction, and believes him to be one of the saints of the earth. 'And who would not have done the like,' says the story, 'hearing a man to speak in this manner when he was at the very point of death?'

So Master Chappelet is buried in the convent and sermons are preached upon him, and he is canonised, and the crowd press about his bier for relics, and a chapel is built for his tomb, and 'for many days it was strange to see how the country people came thither in heaps, with holy candles and other offerings, and images of wax fastened to the tomb, in sign of sacred and solemn vows to this new-created Saint'.

I have quoted at some length to illustrate the zest of Boccaccio and his generosity of treatment, if I may so call it. Here is a hypocrite in the grand style! It is all done for a single end, to save himself and his hosts from danger and discomfort. But the real motive is the delight of the craftsman—hypocrisy for art's sake.

Think of the slightness of the story. A wicked lawyer makes a lying confession on his death-bed and dies in the odour of sanctity. That is all. How many writers, presented with that summary, would make a living thing of it, full of humour and irony and delight? It is not even one of the best told of Boccaccio's stories; yet the vitality of his genius is in every part of it.

When he comes to narrate histories that are full of incident, what a pageant of human adventure unrolls itself before our eyes! What dazzling and terrifying possibilities seem to lie in wait for us at every corner! And what a picture of Europe, and of its wayfaring life, at a time so unlike our own, a time when man had his face set towards liberty! The short summaries of the stories are full of life. Here is one of them:

'Three young men are in love with three sisters, and elope with them into Crete. There the eldest sister, urged by jealousy, kills her lover. The second sister saves her from the penalty of death by yielding to the suit of the Duke of Crete, but is herself thereupon killed by her own lover, who flies away in company with the elder sister. The third couple, being left behind, are charged with the murder, and being unable to face the prospect of torture, confess themselves guilty, but bribe the keepers of the prison with money and escape into Rhodes, where they die in great poverty.'

It is like the record of a police case, yet it is all made significant and vivid by Boccaccio. The eldest brother sets the whole train of violence in motion by his fickleness; the others are involved by the passions of anger and love, so that, however extravagant the summary may sound, the events, as Boccaccio narrates them, seem to follow one another naturally and inevitably, linked in the chain of Fate.

The dangers of passion, the dangers of folly and vanity, these certainly are morals to be found every-

where in the *Decameron*. Boccaccio has a singularly light and happy touch in his treatment of foolish persons. He has no acquaintance with the kind of foolishness that confounds the wisdom of this world; he is never metaphysical in his treatment. Shakespeare's fools are, many of them, also God's fools; they live in the deeper issues of things. But Boccaccio's fools and dunces are ordinary human creatures in whom the human faculty of prudence and discernment is quaintly and delightfully lacking. They are a numerous and amiable family. There is the poor simple-minded painter Calandrino, a troubled soul, who was sadly duped time and again by his fellows, Bruno and Buffalmaco, men of very recreative spirits. There is the foolish young gentlewoman of Venice, empty-headed and vain of her beauty, who was induced to believe that the god Cupid himself had fallen in love with her. There is the medical man, Doctor Simon, who took a house in Florence and watched the passers-by, in the hope that he might get them for patients. Unfortunately he chanced to fasten his attention on Bruno and Buffalmaco, and he noticed that they lived merrily and with less care than any one else in the city. When he heard that they were poor men, and painters by profession, he wondered (knowing nothing of the artistic temperament) how it was possible for them to live so jocundly and in such poverty. So he asked them what hidden means of livelihood they had. They, perceiving him to be a loggerhead, plied him with tales of a secret club, founded by a necromancer, frequented by Kings and Empresses, and endowed with all the luxuries of the world. Then the Doctor had them daily for guests, and employed them to paint his dining-room and his street-door and all the parts of his house with suitable frescoes. And he besought them to admit him to their club—the Pirates' Club, as they were pleased

to call it. All the time that Bruno was painting the Battle of the Rats and Cats in the gallery of the Doctor's garden, the Doctor would stand by and hold the candle for him, for he painted after dusk, and tease him to be allowed to join the club. 'Hold the candle a little nearer,' said Bruno, 'till I have finished the tails of these rats, then I will answer you.' The poor Doctor ransacked his head for everything that might tell in his favour. 'I would do anything for you,' he said; 'you might take me into your club. You can perfectly well see what a handsome man I am, and how well my legs are proportioned to my body, and I have a face like a rose, and, more than that, I am a Doctor of Medicine, and I think you have none of that profession in your club, and I have a great store of anecdote, and can sing a good song, and if you don't believe it, I will sing you one.' With that he began to sing. In the sequel Master Doctor was very shamefully treated by the high-spirited painters. Folly never triumphs in Boccaccio, and the practical jokes that are put upon it often transgress the limits of delicate taste.

If Boccaccio is the first of the moderns, the world that he paints is more than half mediaeval. The nobility and beauty of that older world of chivalry shine out in the loftier tales. I must tell only one of them, and in my own translation, for the translations that I have seen do not render the courtesies of the original. Most of the effect is in the deliberate, loving detail; and no translation can present more than a shadow. Here is the ninth story of the fifth day, told by Fiammetta, who was elected queen for that day's session:—

There once lived in Florence a young gentleman named Federigo degli Alberighi, who was reputed for courtesy and feats of arms above all the other gallants in Tuscany. He fell in love with a lady called

Monna Giovanna, the fairest and most gracious lady in Florence, and to win her favour he launched out into lavish expenses of every kind, feasts and banquets, tilts and tournaments. But she, being as virtuous as she was fair, made no account whatever of these things, nor of the giver of them. So Federigo wasted all his substance, and in the end had to retire to a single poor little farm, where he lived with no companion but his favourite hawk or falcon, one of the best in the world ; and there living on what his falcon caught for him, he passed his time in poverty and obscurity.

Meantime Monna Giovanna's husband died, leaving all his property to their son, and if the son should die without issue, to Monna Giovanna herself. Being left a widow, she lived during the summer season at a country house which happened to be near Federigo's farm.

The young man, her son, who was fond of coursing and hawking, struck up a friendship with Federigo, and took especial delight in the wonderful flights of the falcon. He greatly coveted to have the falcon for his own, but seeing how dearly Federigo loved her, he forbore to make the request. After a time the youth, who was an only child, fell ill, and, in spite of his mother's care, wasted away. She cherished him night and day, and urged him to ask her for anything that he had a fancy for, promising that she would get it for him if by any means she could. So at last he said, 'If I could only have Federigo's falcon for my own, I believe I should recover.'

The lady stood still for a long time on hearing this, and thought of many things. What could she do ? She remembered how Federigo loved the falcon, never letting it go far from him. She remembered how constant he had been in his affection to herself, and how she had never shown him the least token of kindness. 'How dare I send, or go,' she thought, 'and

ask him for the falcon, the best that ever flew? How can I be so churlish as to try to take away from this gentleman his one remaining delight?' She knew that she had only to ask for the falcon to have it, and her mind was full of troubled thought. At last love for her son prevailed, and she determined, whatever might come of it, not to send, but to go herself and make the request. So she promised her son that she would bring it to him, and at once he began to amend.

The first thing in the morning she took a waiting gentlewoman with her and walked to Federigo's farm. He was in a little garden behind the house, attending to the work of the place, but when he heard that Monna Giovanna was there, he ran to welcome her. She greeted him gently, and said, 'I have come, Federigo, to recompense a part of the loss you had by me, when you offered me more love than it befitted you to give or me to take. And the recompense is this: I and this lady are willing to be your guests, and to dine with you this morning.' Federigo made reverence and said, 'Madonna, I do not remember ever to have had any loss by you, but rather so much gain that if I am worth anything at all it is by virtue of your worthiness and of the love that I bore to you. Your generous visit is more to me than it would be if I had all my riches to spend again, for now you have come to a poor house.' So he received her with diffidence, and took her into his little garden, and said, 'Madonna, since I have no other retinue, this good woman here, the wife of an honest labourer, will attend on you while I make ready the dinner.' Though his poverty was extreme, he had never felt it till now, for in the house he found nothing to entertain the lady herself for whose sake he had in times past feasted thousands; he was beside himself with distress, and ran hither and thither, cursing his ill fortune, but found no money, and nothing of value that he could sell for money.

He could not bring himself to borrow from the labouring people who served him, much less to beg of any one else, when suddenly his eyes fell upon his falcon, sitting on its perch in the little room in which he lived. This was his only resource ; he took hold of it, and, finding it plump, thought that it would make a dish worthy of his lady. Without more ado he wrung the falcon's neck, and gave it to a little maid to pluck it, and truss it, and put it on the spit, while he laid the table with the few white napkins which were left to him. Then with a more cheerful countenance he went to the lady in the garden and told her that dinner, the best that he could provide, was served. So they sat down, and Federigo waited on them, and, without suspecting what they were eating, they ate the falcon. When they had risen from the table and had talked pleasantly on indifferent topics for a while, it seemed to the lady that the time was come to tell her errand ; so, looking kindly at Federigo, she said, 'Federigo, I daresay when I tell you what brought me here you will be amazed at my presumption, and will think of the past, and of my honourable rejection of you, which perhaps seemed to you nothing but cruelty and hardness of heart ; but if you had ever had children, you would forgive me, at least in part, for you would know how strong is the love that binds us to them. Though you have none, I have an only child. I must obey the law that is laid on mothers ; I am forced, against my will, to make an unseemly request and to ask you to give me something that is very dear to you, and no wonder, for your hard fortune has left you no other pleasure or comfort in life—I mean your falcon, which has so infatuated my poor boy that if I do not take it home to him he will grow worse, and if complications set in I dread that I may lose him. So I implore you, not for the love that you once felt for me—that is no obligation at all—but in

the name of your own generosity, which is greater than ever I found in any one else, to give me the falcon, so that when it has saved the life of my son he may be your debtor for ever.'

Federigo, hearing what the lady asked, and knowing that he could not help her, because he had given her the falcon to eat, stood with the tears in his eyes, and could not answer her a word. She thought that he grieved at parting with the falcon, and very nearly said she would not take it; however, she controlled herself, and waited to hear his reply. 'Madonna,' he said, when he had mastered his grief, 'since first it pleased God that I should set my love on you, I have often had to lament my fortune, which has been adverse in many things, but all that ever I suffered has been a trifle compared with this. How can I ever forgive my hard fate, when I think that you have come to my poor house, where you never would condescend to come while I was rich, and have asked me for a little tiny gift, and it is out of my power to give it you. I will tell you why: When I heard that you were pleased to dine with me, for which I cannot thank you enough, I thought of your nobility and worth, and I felt it only right to honour you, so far as I could, with a dearer entertainment and choicer fare than is offered on common occasions. So I remembered my falcon, which now you ask me to give you, and I thought how splendid a creature she was, and worthy to lay before you. So this very morning you have had her roasted upon a dish, and I felt I could not have put her to a better use. But now that I know you wanted her for quite another purpose, it is so great a grief to me to be unable to serve you that I shall never have peace again for thinking of it.' To witness what he said, he sent for the feathers and talons and beak, and laid them before her.

The lady, when she saw and heard all this, at first

felt that he was much to blame for having killed so noble a creature to give a woman something to eat, but when she thought of his greatness of soul, which poverty had no power to abase, she commended him in her secret heart. Having no hope now of getting the falcon, and fearing for her son's health, she took her leave in very low spirits, and returned to her son, who before many days, whether because he was disappointed about the falcon, or perhaps because his disease ran its natural course, died, and left his mother inconsolable. And she, though she continued in great sorrow, yet being rich and still in the flower of her age, was urged by her brothers to marry again. She had no mind to another marriage, yet being plagued without ceasing by her brothers, she called to mind Federigo's loftiness of character, and especially the magnificence of his generosity in sacrificing so noble a falcon to do her honour, and she said to them, 'I am well content to stay as I am, if only you would leave me in peace; but if you insist on my marrying again, I must tell you that I will certainly never marry any one unless it be Federigo degli Alberighi.' Then her brothers laughed at her, and said, 'You silly creature, do you know what you are talking about? How can you take him for a husband; he has not a farthing in the world.' But she replied, 'I know that quite well, but I think it is better to marry a man ill-provided with wealth, than to marry wealth ill-provided with a man.' The brothers, seeing that her mind was fixed, and knowing Federigo for a man of mark, poor though he was, fell in with her wishes, and gave her to him, with all that belonged to her. And he seeing that a lady of such worth, whom he had loved so long and so dearly, was now his wife, and had brought him all her wealth, became a better manager than before, and lived with her in all gladness to the end of his days.

It would be difficult to overpraise the delicacy and beauty of that story. It is not tragic, yet it has a pathos as lofty as tragedy. It is not well adapted for the stage, as Tennyson's distortion of it shows; the actual crisis is dangerously trivial—a housekeeper's dilemma. It is perfectly adapted for Boccaccio's narrative method with interspersed speeches which take us into the confidence of the characters. It is only one proof out of many that he can take the stuff of daily life, stuff that would be rejected off-hand by more ambitious writers, and can wring from it effects that poetry might well envy.

The prose style of Boccaccio was dominant in narrative literature for centuries, yet it will disappoint those who test it by modern standards, and it misled many imitators. It is not a simple style—rather it is curious and alembicated, but this was for a sufficient purpose. The stories he had to tell were many of them very plain broad folk-stories, but they were to be told in a courtly circle. Boccaccio never uses a coarse word. He is very sparing in his use of colloquial expressions, which, when they do occur, have the more effect from their rarity and their setting. In this matter he is like Malory, who also preserves a single atmosphere throughout all his tales. The atmosphere of the *Decameron* is the atmosphere of the polite garden; if the exploits of clowns and rascals are told, the language in which they are told sets the speaker aloof from them in the attitude of a curious student of human life. The reported speeches of the characters, especially the longer speeches, are not dramatic; they are written to reveal thought and motive. When Tancred, Prince of Salerno, finds that his daughter has a secret lover, he causes the lover, Guiscardo, to be seized, and reproaches Ghismonda with her crime. She replies in a long speech, not truly dramatic, but none the worse for that. It is a noble

speech, full of faith and courage and defiance. She knew that Guiscardo was as good as dead, and she felt indescribable anguish; she could have wept and cried aloud, but the pride of her soul disdained tears and entreaty, for she intended not to survive him; wherefore, not in the least like a weeping woman, or one who accepts reproof for her sin, she answered her father in high, careless fashion, frankly and courageously, without a tear in her eyes, and without a sign of perturbation in her soul. 'Tancred,' she said, 'I am in no mind either to deny or to entreat; the one way would bring me no help, and I seek no help the other way; moreover, I do not intend by act or word to appeal to your love or mercy; I shall confess the truth, first vindicating my honour with sound reasons, and then resolutely following the dictates of my unconquered soul. It is true that I have loved Guiscardo, and I do love him, and so long as I live, which will not be long, I shall love him; and if there is love after death, I shall never cease to love him. But it was not the frailty of woman that led me to this, so much as the little care you had to marry me, and the virtues of Guiscardo himself. You ought to know, Tancred, since you are made of flesh and blood, that the daughter you begot is also flesh and blood, and not stone or iron; and you ought to remember, though now you are old, what are the laws of youth, and how powerfully they work their effect.' These are the opening sentences of this amazing speech, so exalted in its temper, so fearless in its humanity, so perfectly characteristic of Boccaccio. It could hardly have been spoken at a tragic crisis; it is too elaborate for that; but it sets forth the whole inward meaning of the crisis, and some part of the creed of the author. The story of Tancred and Ghismonda has been told a hundred times since first it was told in Tuscan prose, but the first telling has never been equalled.

We make too little of Boccaccio. The splendid palace that he built, with a hundred rooms, has not been neglected, it is true, but it has been used as a quarry by other builders. Chaucer, Shakespeare, and how many more, took what they wanted from it, so that we are sometimes tempted to regard Boccaccio as if his chief use were to lend material to greater men. It is not so; he was as fine an artist as the best of them; his method was all his own; he cannot be superseded; and his work has aged less than the work of those who borrowed from him. He has the elixir of life; he is eternally joyous and eternally young.

DON QUIXOTE[1]

A Spanish knight, about fifty years of age, who lived in great poverty in a village of La Mancha, gave himself up so entirely to reading the romances of chivalry, of which he had a large collection, that in the end they turned his brain, and nothing would satisfy him but that he must ride abroad on his old horse, armed with spear and helmet, a knight-errant, to encounter all adventures, and to redress the innumerable wrongs of the world. He induced a neighbour of his, a poor and ignorant peasant called Sancho Panza, mounted on a very good ass, to accompany him as squire. The knight saw the world only in the mirror of his beloved romances; he mistook inns for enchanted castles, windmills for giants, and country wenches for exiled princesses. His high spirit and his courage never failed him, but his illusions led him into endless trouble. In the name of justice and chivalry he intruded himself on all whom he met, and assaulted all whom he took to be making an oppressive or discourteous use of power. He and his poor squire were beaten, trounced, cheated, and ridiculed on all hands, until in the end, by the kindliness of his old friends in the village, and with the help of some new friends who had been touched by the amiable and generous character of his illusions, the knight was cured of his whimsies and was led back to his home in the village, there to die.

That is the story of Don Quixote: it seems a slight

[1] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, born at Alcalá de Henares, 1547; died at Madrid, 23 April 1616.

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framework for what, without much extravagance, may be called the wisest and most splendid book in the world. It is an old man's book; there is in it all the wisdom of a fiery heart that has learned patience. Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day, but if Cervantes had died at the same age as Shakespeare we should have had no *Don Quixote*. Shakespeare himself has written nothing so full of the diverse stuff of experience, so quietly and steadily illuminated by gentle wisdom, so open-eyed in discerning the strength of the world; and Shakespeare himself is not more courageous in championing the rights of the gallant heart. Suppose the Governor of Barataria had been called on to decide the cause between these two great authors. His judgments were often wonderfully simple and obvious. Perhaps he would have ruled that whereas Shakespeare died at the age of fifty-two and Cervantes lived seventeen years longer, a man shall give his days and nights to the study of Shakespeare until he is older than ever Shakespeare was, and then, for the solace of his later years, shall pass on to the graver school of Cervantes. Not every man lives longer than Shakespeare; and, of those who do, not every man masters the art and craft of growing older with the passage of years, so that, by this rule, the Spanish gentleman would have a much smaller circle of intimates than the High Bailiff's son of Stratford. And so he has; yet his world-wide popularity is none the less assured. He has always attracted, and will always attract, a great company of readers who take a simple and legitimate delight in the comic distresses of the deluded Don, in the tricks put upon him, in the woful absurdity of his appearance, in the many love-stories and love-songs that he hears, in the variety of the characters that he meets, in the wealth of the incidents and events that spring up, a joyous crop, wherever he sets his foot, and not least,

perhaps, in the beatings, poundings, scratchings, and tumblings in the mire that are his daily portion. That is to say, those who care little or nothing for Don Quixote may yet take pleasure in the life that is in his book; and his book is full of life.

We have no very ample record of the life experiences of Cervantes, which are distilled in this, his greatest book.[1] We know that he was a soldier, and fought against the Turks at Lepanto, where his left hand was maimed for life; that he was made prisoner some years later by the Moors, and suffered five years' captivity at Algiers; that he attempted with others to escape, and when discovered and cross-examined took the whole responsibility on himself; that at last he was ransomed by the efforts of his family and friends, and returned to Spain, there to live as best he could the life of a poor man of letters, with intermittent Government employ, for thirty-six more years. He wrote sonnets and plays, pawned his family's goods, and was well acquainted with the inside of prisons. He published the First Part of *Don Quixote* in 1605—that is to say, in his fifty-eighth year—and thenceforward enjoyed a high reputation, though his poverty continued. In 1615 the Second Part of *Don Quixote* appeared, wherein the author makes delightful play

[1] The authentic facts concerning the life of Cervantes have been collected and stated with admirable scholarly precision by Professor Fitzmaurice-Kelly, in his recent *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a Memoir* (Clarendon Press, 1913). In this biography is embodied all that can be learned from the large array of documents discovered and published within the last twenty years by the late Cristobal Pérez Pastor. The resulting addition to our knowledge will disappoint those who are not accustomed to the perspective of the law. A man's small debts and worries are recorded on parchment; the crucial events of his life find no historian but himself. To compile a life of Cervantes from this wilderness of documents is as difficult as it must always be to write the life of a soldier and poet from the evidence supplied by his washing-bills and tax-papers. Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly has performed his task modestly and judiciously.

with the First Part by treating it as a book well known to all the characters of the story. In the following year he died, clothed in the Franciscan habit, and was buried in the convent of the Barefooted Trinitarian Nuns in Madrid. No stone marks his grave, but his spirit still wanders the world in the person of the finest gentleman of all the realms of fact and fable, who still maintains in discourse with all whom he meets that the thing of which the world has most need is knights-errant, to do honour to women, to fight for the cause of the oppressed, and to right the wrong. 'This, then, gentlemen,' he may still be heard saying, 'it is to be a knight-errant, and what I have spoken of is the order of chivalry, in the which, as I have already said, I, though a sinner, have made profession; the same which these famous knights profess do I profess; and that is why I am travelling through these deserts and solitary places, in quest of adventures, with deliberate resolve to offer my arm and my person to the most dangerous adventure which fortune may present, in aid of the weak and needy.' And the world is still incredulous and dazed. 'By these words which he uttered', says the author in brief comment on the foregoing speech, 'the travellers were quite convinced that Don Quixote was out of his wits.'

It has often been said, and is still sometimes repeated by good students of Cervantes, that his main object in writing *Don Quixote* was to put an end to the influence of the romances of chivalry. It is true that these romances were the fashionable reading of his age, that many of them were trash, and that some of them were pernicious trash. It is true also that the very scheme of his book lends itself to a scathing exposure of their weaknesses, and that the moral is pointed in the scene of the Inquisition of the Books, where the priest, the barber, the housekeeper, and the niece destroy

the greater part of his library by fire. But how came it that Cervantes knew the romances so well, and dwelt on some of their incidents in such loving detail? Moreover, it is worth noting that not a few of them are excluded by name from the general condemnation. *Amadis of Gaul* is spared, because it is 'the best of all books of the kind'. Equal praise is given to *Palmerin of England*; while of *Tirante the White* the priest himself declares that it is a treasure of delight and a mine of pastime.

'Truly, I declare to you, gossip, that in its style this is the best book in the world. Here the knights eat and sleep, and die in their beds, and make their wills before they die, with other things in which the rest of the books of this kind are wanting.'

But even stronger evidence of the esteem that Cervantes felt for the best of the romances is to be found in his habit of linking their names with the poems of Homer and Virgil. So, in the course of instruction given by Don Quixote to Sancho Panza, while they dwelt in the wilds of the Sierra Morena, Ulysses is cited as the model of prudence and patience, Aeneas as the greatest of pious sons and expert captains, and Amadis as the 'pole star, the morning star, the sun of valiant and enamoured knights, whom all we have to copy, who do battle under the banner of love and chivalry'. It would indeed be a strange thing if a book which is so brave an exercise of the creative imagination, were mainly destructive in its aim, and deserved no higher honour than a scavenger. The truth is that the book is so many-sided that all kinds of tastes and beliefs can find their warrant in it. The soul of it is an irony so profound that but few of its readers have explored it to the depths. It is like a mine, deep below deep; and much good treasure is to be found at the more easily accessible levels. All irony criticizes the imperfect ideas and theories of mankind, not by substituting for them other ideas and

other theories, less imperfect, but by placing the facts of life, in mute comment, alongside of the theories. The Ruler of the World is the great master of irony; and man has been permitted to share some part of his enjoyment in the purifying power of fact. The weaker and more querulous members of the race commonly try to enlist the facts in the service of their pet ideas. A grave and deep spirit like Cervantes knows that the facts will endure no such servitude. They will not take orders from those who call for their verdict, nor will they be content to speak only when they are asked to speak. They intrude suddenly, in the most amazing and irrelevant fashion, on the carefully ordered plans of humanity. They cannot be explained away, and many a man who thought to have guarded himself against surprise has been surprised by love and death.

Every one sees the irony of *Don Quixote* in its first degree, and enjoys it in its more obvious forms. This absurd old gentleman, who tries to put his antiquated ideas into action in a busy, selfish, prosy world, is a figure of fun even to the meanest intelligence. But, with more thought, there comes a check to our frivolity. Is not all virtue and all goodness in the same case as Don Quixote? Does the author, after all, mean to say that the world is right, and that those who try to better it are wrong? If that is what he means, how is it that at every step of our journey we come to like the Don better, until in the end we can hardly put a limit to our love and reverence for him? Is it possible that the criticism is double-edged, and that what we are celebrating with our laughter is the failure of the world?

A wonderful thing in Cervantes's handling of his story is his absolute honesty and candour. He does not mince matters. His world behaves as the world may be expected to behave when its daily interests

are violently disordered by a lunatic. Failure upon failure dogs the steps of poor Don Quixote, and he has no popularity to redeem his material disasters. 'He who writes of me', says the Don pensively, in his discussion with the bachelor Sampson, 'will please very few'; and the only comfort the bachelor can find for him is that the number of fools is infinite, and that the First Part of his adventures has delighted them all. As an example of Cervantes's treatment take one of the earliest of these adventures, the rescue of the boy Andres from the hands of his oppressor. As he rode away from the inn, on the first day of his knighthood, while yet he was unfurnished with a squire, Don Quixote heard cries of complaint from a thicket near by. He thanked Heaven for giving him so early an opportunity of service, and turned his horse aside to where he found a farmer beating a boy. Don Quixote, with all knightly formality, called the farmer a coward, and challenged him to single combat. The farmer, terrified by the strange apparition, explained that the boy was his servant and by gross carelessness had lost sheep for him at the rate of one a day. The matter was at last settled by the farmer liberating the boy and promising to pay him in full his arrears of wages; whereupon the knight rode away, well pleased. Then the farmer tied up the boy again, and beat him more severely than ever, till at the last he loosed him, and told him to go and seek redress from his champion. 'So the boy departed sobbing, and his master stayed behind laughing, and after this manner did the valorous Don Quixote right that wrong.' Later on, when the knight and his squire are in the wilds, with the company whom chance has gathered around them, the boy appears again, and Don Quixote narrates the story of his deliverance as an illustration of the benefits conferred on the world by knight-errantry.

'All that your worship says is true,' replies the lad, 'but the end of the business was very much the contrary of what your worship imagines.' 'How contrary?' said Don Quixote. 'Did he not pay thee, then?' 'He not only did not pay me,' said the boy, 'but as soon as your worship had got outside the wood, and we were alone, he tied me again to the same tree, and gave me so many lashes that he left me flayed like St. Bartholomew; and at every lash he gave me, he uttered some jest or scoff, to make a mock of your worship; and if I had not felt so much pain, I would have laughed at what he said. . . . For all this your worship is to blame, because if you had held on your way, and had not meddled with other people's business, my master would have been content to give me a dozen or two lashes, and afterwards he would have released me and paid me what he owed. But as your worship insulted him and called him bad names, his anger was kindled, and as he could not avenge himself on you, he let fly the tempest on me.'

Don Quixote sadly admits his error, and confesses that he ought to have remembered that 'no churl keeps the word he gives if he finds that it does not suit him to keep it'. But he promises Andres that he will yet see him righted; and with that the boy's terror awakes. 'For the love of God, sir knight-errant,' he says, 'if you meet me again, and see me being cut to pieces, do not rescue me, nor help me, but leave me to my pain; for, however great it be, it cannot be greater than will come to me from the help of your worship—whom, with all the knights-errant ever born into the world, may God confound!' With that he ran away, and Don Quixote stood very much abashed by his story, so that the rest of the company had to take great care that they did not laugh outright and put him to confusion.

At no point in the story does Cervantes permit the reader to forget that the righter of wrongs must not look in this world for either success or praise. The indignities heaped upon that gentle and heroic soul almost revolt the reader, as Charles Lamb remarked. He is beaten and kicked; he has his teeth knocked out,

and consoles himself with the thought that these hardships are incident to his profession; his face is all bedaubed with mud, and he answers with grave politeness to the mocks of those who deride him. When he stands sentry on the back of his horse at the inn, to guard the sleepers, the stable wench, Maritornes, gets him to reach up his hand to an upper window, or rather a round hole in the wall of the hayloft, whereupon she slips a running noose over his wrist and ties the rope firmly to a bar within the loft. In this posture, and in continual danger of being hung by the arm if his horse should move away, he stands till dawn, when four travellers knock at the gate of the inn. He at once challenges them for their discourtesy in disturbing the slumbers of those whom he is guarding. Even the Duke and the Duchess, who feel kindly to Don Quixote and take him under their care, are quite ready to play rough practical jokes on him. It is while he is their guest that his face is all scratched and clawed by frightened cats turned loose in his bedroom at night. His friends in the village were kinder than this, but they, to get him home, carried him through the country in a latticed cage on poles, like a wild beast, for the admiration of the populace; and he bethought himself, 'As I am a new knight in the world, and the first that hath revived the forgotten exercise of chivalry, these are newly invented forms of enchantment.' His spirit rises superior to all his misfortunes, and his mind remains as serene as a cloudless sky.

But Don Quixote, it may be objected, is mad. Here the irony of Cervantes finds a deeper level. Don Quixote is a high-minded idealist, who sees all things by the light of his own lofty preconceptions. To him every woman is beautiful and adorable; everything that is said to him is worthy to be heard with attention and respect; every community of men, even the casual

assemblage of lodgers at an inn, is a society founded on strict rules of mutual consideration and esteem. He shapes his behaviour in accordance with these ideas, and is laughed at for his pains. But he has a squire, Sancho Panza, who is a realist and loves food and sleep, who sees the world as it is, by the light of common day. Sancho, it might be supposed, is sane, and supplies a sure standard whereby to measure his master's deviations from the normal. Not at all; Sancho, in his own way, is as mad as his master. If the one is betrayed by fantasy, the other is betrayed, with as ludicrous a result, by common sense. The thing is well seen in the question of the island, the government of which is to be intrusted to Sancho when Don Quixote comes into his kingdom. Sancho, though he would have seen through the pretences of any merely corrupt bargainer, recognizes at once that his master is disinterested and truthful, and he believes all he hears about the island. He spends much thought on the scheme, and passes many criticisms on it. Sometimes he protests that he is quite unfit for the position of a governor, and that his wife would cut a poor figure as a governor's lady. At other times he vehemently asserts that many men of much less ability than himself are governors, and eat every day off silver plate. Then he hears that, if an island should not come to hand, he is to be rewarded with a slice of a continent, and at once he stipulates that his domain shall be situated on the coast, so that he may put his subjects to a profitable use by selling them into slavery. It is not a gloss upon Cervantes to say that Sancho is mad; the suggestion is made, with significant repetition, in the book itself. 'As the Lord liveth,' says the barber, addressing the squire, 'I begin to think that thou oughtest to keep him company in the cage, and that thou art as much enchanted as he. In an evil day wast thou impregnated

with his promises, and it was a sorrowful hour when the island of thy longings entered thy skull.'

So these two, in the opinion of the neighbours, are both mad, yet most of the wisdom of the book is theirs, and when neither of them is talking, the book falls into mere commonplace. And this also is many times recognized and commented on in the book itself. Sometimes it is the knight, and sometimes the squire, whose conversation makes the hearers marvel that one who talks with so much wisdom, justice, and discernment should act so foolishly. Certainly the book is a paradise of delightful discourse wherein all topics are handled and are presented in a new guise. The dramatic setting, which is the meaning of the book, is never forgotten; yet the things said are so good that when they are taken out of their setting they shine still, though with diminished splendour. What could be better than Don Quixote's treatment of the question of lineage, when he is considering his future claim to marry the beautiful daughter of a Christian or paynim King? 'There are two kinds of lineage,' he remarks. 'The difference is this—that some were what they are not, and others are what they were not; and when the thing is looked into I might prove to be one of those who had a great and famous origin, with which the King, my father-in-law who is to be, must be content.' Or what could be wiser than Sancho's account of his resignation of the governorship? 'Yesterday morning I left the island as I found it, with the same streets, houses, and tiles which they had when I went there. I have borrowed nothing of nobody, nor mixed myself up with the making of profits, and though I thought to make some profitable laws, I did not make any of them, for I was afraid they would not be kept, which would be just the same as if they had never been made.' Many of those who come across the pair in the course of their wanderings

fall under the fascination of their talk. Not only so, but the world of imagination in which the two wanderers live proves so attractive, the infection of their ideas is so strong, that, long before the end of the story is reached, a motley company of people, from the Duke and Duchess down to the villagers, have set their own business aside in order to take part in the make-believe, and to be the persons of Don Quixote's dream. There was never any Kingdom of Barataria; but the hearts of all who knew him were set on seeing how Sancho would comport himself in the office of Governor, so the Duke lent a village for the purpose, and it was put in order and furnished with officers of State for the part that it had to play. In this way some of the fancies of the talkers almost struggle into existence, and the dream of Don Quixote makes the happiness it does not find.

Nothing in the story is more touching than the steadily growing attachment and mutual admiration of the knight and the squire. Each deeply respects the wisdom of the other, though Don Quixote, whose taste in speech is courtly, many times complains of Sancho's swarm of proverbs. Each is influenced by the other; the knight insists on treating the squire with the courtesies due to an equal, and poor Sancho, in the end, declares that not all the governments of the world shall tempt him away from the service of his beloved master. What, then, are we to think, and what does their creator think, of those two madmen, whose lips drop wisdom? 'Mark you, Sancho,' said Don Quixote, 'there are two kinds of beauty—one of the soul, and another of the body. That of the soul excelleth in knowledge, in modesty, in fine conduct, in liberality and good breeding; and all these virtues are found in, and may belong to, an ugly man. . . . I see full well, Sancho, that I am not beautiful, but I know also that I am not deformed, and it is enough

for a man of honour to be no monster; he may be well loved, if he possesses those gifts of soul which I have mentioned.' Sometimes, at the height of his frenzy, the knight seems almost inspired. So, when the shepherds have entertained him, he offers, by way of thanks, to maintain against all comers the fame and beauty of the shepherdesses, and utters his wonderful little speech on gratitude:

'For the most part, he who receives is inferior to him who gives; and hence God is above all, because he is, above all, the great giver; and the gifts of man cannot be equal to those of God, for there is an infinite distance between them; and the narrowness and insufficiency of the gifts of man is eked out by gratitude.'

There cannot be too much of this kind of madness. Well may Don Antonio cry out on the bachelor Sampson, who dresses himself as the Knight of the Silver Moon and overthrows Don Quixote in fight:

'O sir, may God forgive you the wrong you have done to all the world in desiring to make a sane man of the most gracious madman that the world contains! Do you not perceive that the profit which shall come from the healing of Don Quixote can never be equal to the pleasure which is caused by his ecstasies?'

What if the world itself is mad, not with the ecstasy of Don Quixote, nor with the thrifty madness of Sancho, but with a flat kind of madness, a makeshift compromise between faith and doubt? All men have a vein of Quixotry somewhere in their nature. They can be counted on, in most things, to follow the beaten path of interest and custom, till suddenly there comes along some question on which they refuse to appeal to interest; they take their stand on principle, and are adamant. All men know in themselves the mood of Sancho, when he says:

'I have heard the preachers preach that we should love our Lord for himself alone, without being moved to it by the hope

of glory or the fear of pain ; but, for my own part, I would love him for what he is able to do for me.'

These two moods, the mood of Quixote and the mood of Sancho, seem to divide between them most of the splendours and most of the comforts of human life. It is rare to find either mood in its perfection. A man who should consistently indulge in himself the mood of the unregenerate Sancho would be a rogue, though, if he preserved good temper in his doings, he would be a pleasant rogue. The man who should maintain in himself the mood of Quixote would be something very like a saint. The saints of the Church Militant would find no puzzle and no obscurity in the character of the Knight of La Mancha. Some of them, perhaps, would understand, better than Don Quixote understood, that the full record of his doings, compiled by Cervantes, is both a tribute to the saintly character, and a criticism of it. They certainly could not fail to discover the religious kernel of the book, as the world, in the easy confidence of its own superiority, has failed to discover it. They would know that whoso loseth his life shall save it ; they would not find it difficult to understand how Don Quixote, and, in his own degree, Sancho, was willing to be a fool, that he, and the world with him, might be made wise. Above all, they would appreciate the more squalid misadventures of Don Quixote, for, unlike the public, which recognizes the saint by his aureole, they would know, none better, that the way they have chosen is the way of contempt, and that Christianity was nursed in a manger.

SIR THOMAS HOBY[1]

The Renaissance is the name of a European movement so gradual, broad, manifold, and subtle, that any attempt to reduce it to a single expression is predestined to failure. No formula less vague and magniloquent than Michelet's—'the discovery by man of himself and of the world'—can be stretched to cover the diverse aspects of that great era of change. On all sides there was a loosening of bonds, and a widening of horizons, 'deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind'. The extension of man's territorial domain, and of his imaginative prospect, by the discovery of the New World, the shattering of his most familiar conceptions by the brilliant conjectures of Copernicus, are two signal achievements which may perhaps be taken as emblematic of all the rest. By these the mediaeval scheme of the physical universe, and with it the mediaeval theory of divinity and politics, to which it was so delicately and symmetrically fitted, were to be finally overthrown. At the same time the rediscovery and reconstruction of classical antiquity by the labours of scholars gave to imagination a new focus, and to humanity a new model. St. Augustine's dream of a City of God waxed pale and faint, like a student's midnight taper, when the sun rose on those other cities, wherein were harboured the beauty and the strength of ancient Greece and Rome. In the zest of the new interests and new possibilities that were rising into view, the human kind shook off for a while its old preoccupation with the idea of death, and, undeterred by plague and famine, took for motto 'It

[1] The Introduction to *The Book of the Courtier, from the Italian of Count Baldassare Castiglione: done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby*, published in the *Tudor Translations*, 1900.

is good for us to be here'. The old civilization was passing away, and to the excited hopes of a younger generation all things seemed possible. It was the heyday of the adventurer, the speculator, the promulgator of new systems, the setter-up of new models. The feudal order, with its elaborated rigid tiers and hierarchies, culminating in Emperor and Pope, was crumbling to destruction; slowly and unperceived, strong separate nations were being built up out of its ruins. In the meantime there was room for a new conception of the State, such as was set forth by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*; for a new conception of the position of a Ruler, such as was set forth by Machiavel in his *Prince*; for a new conception of the duties and opportunities of the individual in society, such as was set forth by Count Baldassare Castiglione in his BOOK OF THE COURTIER.[1]

I

No single book can serve as a guide to the Renaissance, or as an index to all that is embraced by 'the comprehensive energy of that significant appellation'. But if one, rather than another, is to be taken for an abstract or epitome of the chief moral and social ideas of the age, that one must be THE COURTIER. It is far indeed from being the greatest book of its time; it is hardly among the greatest. But it is in many ways the most representative. That dominant note of the Renaissance, the individualism which subordinated all institutions to the free development of human faculty, finds full expression in *The Courtyer*—

[1] THE COURTIER, though not printed till 1528, was completed by the author, as shall be seen hereafter, in 1516, the year of the publication of More's *Utopia* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The First Edition of *The Prince* did not appear till 1532, after the death of Machiavel, but the book was written in 1513. To the same time belongs another work of first importance in the history of scholarship and letters: the version of the Greek Testament by Erasmus.

nowhere with a stronger, simpler, and less conscious emphasis than in the high exordium : ' Let us therfore ' at length settle oure selves to begin that is oure ' purpose and drifte, and (if it be possible) let us ' facion such a Courtier, as the Prince that shalbe ' worthye to have him in his servyce, although hys ' state be but small, maye notwythstandynge be called ' a mightye Lorde.' The almost idolatrous reverence for classical precedent, for the deeds and words of the noble Grecians and Romans, which pervades Renaissance literature, has left its mark on every page of The Courtier, and has, moreover, by a happy inspiration, been allowed to determine the very form in which the book is cast. Many of the matters discussed by the writers of his time in separate treatises are dealt with by Castiglione in those interwoven digressions which are permitted to break the monotony of his continued theme. Thus, for instance, the discourse on jests and jesting, introduced into the second book, compares creditably enough with the *Facetiae* of Poggio the Florentine, Secretary of the Apostolic See, or with the *Detti e Fatti, piacevoli e gravi, di diversi Principi, Filosofi e Cortigiani*, compiled and ' reduced to morality ' by the sober Guicciardini, or with any other in the estimable and prolific family of Renaissance jest-books. The discussion in the first book on the true standards of vernacular literature, the use of archaisms, and the relation between writing and speech, is the author's contribution to a question which had been broached by Dante in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and which was hotly debated during the sixteenth century, on the one side and the other, by writers as considerable as Trissino, Machiavel, and Bembo.[1] By his own age and the next, Castiglione rather than Dante was accepted as the most

[1] See Trissino, *Il Castellano* (1529); Machiavelli, *Dialogo sulla Lingua*; Bembo, *Prose* (1525).

distinguished champion, against the Tuscan purists, of a courtly speech common to all Italy.[1] The passionate monologue, again, in praise of Platonic love, which is assigned by the author to Bembo in the fourth book of THE COURTIER, finds its precedent and parallel in the works wherein Ficino and Pico treated the same subject at large. And the lighter pieces of dialectic, the debates, dramatically interrupted, on the comparative worthiness of the sexes and of the fine arts, deal with topics which constantly exercised the wit and the imagination of Renaissance society and Renaissance literature. Take it for all in all, the BOOK OF THE COURTIER reflects as in a mirror the age that gave it birth.

But rather than in these diversions and digressions Castiglione's title to memory is to be found in his treatment of his main theme, his admirable presentment of an ideal perhaps the most valuable and potent of those bequeathed to us by the Renaissance. The idea of the 'scholar-gentleman' is nowhere set forth with more likelihood and consistency of detail, nowhere analysed with a finer skill, than in THE COURTIER. The complete gentleman of Castiglione's portraying differs from the pedantic scholars of the monasteries in that he is to be skilled in the use of arms, a master of all athletic crafts, well versed in affairs, a joyous companion withal, and able to hold his own in the gallant society of a court. His principal profession is still chivalry. To see the world of men and action chiefly through the spectacles of books may be excusable in a trencher-chaplain, or in an ascetic whose life is dedicated to contemplation; in a gentleman it is ignoble. The sentiment of Castiglione's age upon this point is very well expressed by his contemporary Guevara in one of his familiar letters: 'When amongst

[1] Claudio Tolomei in his dialogue, *Il Cesano* (1554), introduces Castiglione as the acknowledged protagonist for the *lingua cortigiana*.

'Knights or Gentlemen talke is of armes, a Gentleman 'ought to have great shame to say, that he read it, 'but rather that he saw it. For it is very convenient 'for the Philosopher to recount what hee hath read, 'but the Knight or Gentleman it becommes to speake 'of things that hee hath done.'[1] On the other hand, the gentleman of the Renaissance differs from the mediaeval knight in that he is to be not only a warrior and a councillor, but also a lover and follower of learning and an adept in the fine arts. 'Besyde good-'nesse,' says our author, 'the true and principall 'ornament of the mynde in everye manne (I beleave) 'are letters.' That the ideal was new is evidenced by the sentence that follows: 'The Frenchmen know 'onelye the noblenesse of armes, and passe for nothing 'beside: so that they do not onelye not sett by letters, 'but they rather abhorre them, and all learned men 'they count verie rascalles, and they thinke it a great 'vilany when any one of them is called a clarke.'[2] But the new conception gained the day, and the figure of a gentleman, as moulded and furnished forth by Castiglione, speedily became a model for all Europe, the North as well as the South. In this 'Mirror of Courtesy' Sir Philip Sidney might have beheld his own likeness. The same pattern was in Milton's mind when he defined the true ends of education. 'I call 'therefore a complete and generous education that 'which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and 'magnanimously all the offices, both private and

[1] *The Familiar Epistles of Sir Antony of Guevara, Bishop of Mondonedo, Preacher and Chronicler to Charles the Fifth.* Translated by Edward Hellowes (1574), p. 69.

[2] In the lettered circles of Renaissance Italy, on the other hand, the tendency was rather to depreciate the virtues fostered by feudalism. Petrarch ridicules tourneys, and Sacchetti speaks of chivalry as fitted only for those who are unable to follow the arts. But Castiglione, who had been a captain of horse, holds for chivalry. He will not pluck off the spurs from a soldier.

'public, of peace and war.'[1] It is a significant point that this definition occurs in a treatise on education. One of the chief problems of the age was how to educate man for a society where a career was open to the talents. Even Spenser's *Faerie Queene* deals with this problem; and if any one choose to call it a tractate on education, the author, at least, would never have demurred. We value the Elizabethans for their art; they prided themselves on their morality. The aim of his book, said Spenser, was the Institution of a Gentleman: 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'—mainly by inculcating on him the twelve private moral virtues of Aristotle, as exemplified in the histories of twelve knights. Earlier than Spenser, Sir Thomas Elyot, in *The Boke named The Governour* (1531), and Roger Ascham in *The Scholemaster* (1570), had dealt with the same question in a like temper. But the most engaging and lively exposition of the new ideal (for the *Faerie Queene*, when all is said, remains a poem) is to be found in the Book of the Courtier. It is the book of a lifetime; amid all the press of affairs that engaged Castiglione in his many capacities there is none that did not help to qualify him for his task. The record of his life has a double interest; it shows how the book grew up and shaped itself from the matter of his experience and reading, and it also shows (a thing not uncommon in the history of artists) how the creature of his imagining assumed control of his ambitions and purposes in the practical conduct of life. He was accused in his own time of identifying himself with his model. 'Some again say that my 'meaning was to facion my self, perswading my self 'that all suche qualities as I appoint to the Courtier 'are in me.' He does not altogether refuse the imputation. 'Unto these men I will not cleane deny

[1] *Of Education.* Milton's Prose Works, Bohn's edition, iii, p. 467.

'that I have attempted all that my mynde is the 'Courtier shoulde have knowleage in. And I thinke 'who so hath not the knowleage of the thinges in-'treated upon in this booke, how learned so ever he 'be, he can full il write them. But I am not of so 'sclender a judgment in knowing my self, that I wil 'take upon me to know what soever I can wish.'[1] His biography is a curious comment on the opinions of those French critics[2] who have found in his book only a manual of finikin etiquette. Where he failed, his good faith and lofty standards were to blame; in his allegiance to the high canons of behaviour which he had laid down for his Courtier, he omitted to take account of human duplicity and human baseness. An honourable politician cannot meet these with their own weapons, but he should be acquainted with their existence; and to see them, one must stoop.

Baldassare Castiglione[3] was born on December the

[1] The Epistle of the Author, p. 23.

[2] Quinet, for instance, in his *Révolutions d'Italie*. The view is expressed in most extravagant fashion by M. Philarète Chasles in his article 'Du Roman dans l'Europe Moderne' (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Mai 1842): 'Il détruit les aspérités, et les diversités, les nuances et 'les passions humaines; il ne s'occupe qu'à raffiner la morale, qui 's'évapore en politesse.' It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that M. Chasles was avenging the slight put upon the culture of France by the remarks cited above, and allowing a sentiment of nationality to attempt the task of criticism.

[3] Apart from the barren *Elogia* of Paolo Giovio and other monumental stonemasons, no serious critical life of Castiglione was attempted until Bernardino Marliani produced one (in 1584), which is prefixed to the Edition of The Courtier published at Padua in 1733. There followed the Life written by the Abate Serassi as preface to an Edition of Castiglione's poetical works (Rome, 1760). The *Lettere Familiari* and *Lettere di Negozii* (2 vols., Padua, 1769–71, edited by Serassi) are a most valuable source of information. Martinati (*Notizie Storico-Biografiche intorno al Conte Bald. Castiglione*, Firenze, 1890) is the best recent biographer; I desire to record my obligation to him, but the interest of his work is almost exclusively political. Separate studies on the man and the book have been published by Alfred Reumont (in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Kultur und*

6th, 1478, at Casatico, in Mantuan territory. He came of a family that had already attained to consideration and honour in Church and State. His father, Cristoforo Castiglione, was a captain of armed troops in the service of the Marquis of Mantua. His mother, Luigia, was of the house of Gonzaga, and so related not only to the Marquis of Mantua, but also to that Duchess of Urbino whose piety and virtue are so eloquently recorded in the Book of the Courtier. From this mother, who was the bosom friend of Isabella d'Este, and was often consulted by her in matters of state, Castiglione received his earliest education at home. Thence he was sent to Milan, where several of the Castiglioni, belonging to another branch of the family, held posts of honour under Duke Ludovico Sforza. He attended the best masters, among them Demetrius Chalchondylas and Filippo Beroaldo. His studies were no doubt wide enough in their range: besides Greek and Latin, he acquired at least a dilettante knowledge in music, painting, and sculpture, architecture and archaeology. But the business of his life was to be war and diplomacy, and he can hardly have reached a professional skill in all the arts that are claimed for him.

With the triumphant entry of Louis XII into Milan in October 1499, witnessed by Castiglione and described by him in a letter to a friend, this period of his life comes to a close. Thenceforth he was to be tossed on that sea of troubled politics, of ever-shifting leagues and counter-leagues between the Pope, the Emperor, the French King, Venice, Florence, and the smaller states of Italy, which neither rested nor permitted those to rest who navigated it for necessity

Literatur der Renaissance, Jahrgang 1, Heft 3), and by Professor Ercole Bottari (in *Annali della R. Scuola Normale di Pisa*, libro iii). The general histories of Tiraboschi, Ginguené, and Gaspary all treat Castiglione with some detail.

or profit. He first entered the service of Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, Captain-General of the French forces in Naples, and was in action at Garigliano. On the return of the forces northward he received permission to stay in Rome for a season, and it was there that he first made acquaintance with Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino. At this time both Pope Julius II and Venice coveted the possession of Romagna, and the frontier situation of Urbino made Guidobaldo a desirable ally for either party. It has been suggested that Castiglione, in transferring his service from the Marquis of Mantua to the Duke of Urbino, acted at the instigation of the Pope, and was prepared to represent Papal interests at the Court of his new master. Another less conjectural version has it that he fell in liking with Guidobaldo at first sight, and finding Cesare Gonzaga, his friend and cousin, in the retinue of the Duke, volunteered to enter the same service, and was accepted. Permission was sought from the Marquis, who granted it in a letter brief, courteous, and, in regard to Castiglione, studiously contemptuous.[1] It was many a year before the truant was forgiven for his changed allegiance.

In the meantime he purchased for himself the few golden years of his life. The Palace of Urbino, built in its 'hard and sharp situation' on the summit of a rock, became for him, from the time that he entered it in September 1504 to the death of Duke Guidobaldo in April 1508, a kind of island of the blest, 'the verye mansion place of Myrth and Joye', glorified to the end of his life in the light of imagination and memory. Here he was graciously received by the Duchess, whose idolater he forthwith became, and introduced to those

[1] It is printed by Martinati, and runs thus: 'Ill^mo Sig. Duca. Quando a Baldassare de Castione piacerà il venire a servire V. Sig. per la parte nostra siamo molto contenti e se in altro la possemo compiacere siamo più che mai disposti. Gonzaga, 9 junio 1504. Francesco Gonzaga.'

noble personages, knights and gentlemen, poets, musicians, and 'all kinds of men of skill', who haunted or visited the Court. He was speedily advanced to offices of high trust. We hear little of military service during these years, much of missions to other Courts: to Ferrara, where Duke Hercules entertained him hospitably, to Mantua, where the Marquis, mindful of the past, attempted to seize him, and whence, being forewarned, he beat a hasty retreat. Twice he was intrusted with more important embassies: the first, in the autumn of 1506, to the Court at London, where he received from King Henry VII for his master the Order of the Garter, and for himself a chain or carcanet of price; and again, in the following year, to King Louis XII at Milan—which embassy brought the ruler of Urbino into bad odour with Pope Julius. His leisure time he spent at Urbino, wooing the Muse in collaboration with Cesare Gonzaga, or devising entertainments for the Court. To these years belong the most of his poetical effusions in Latin and Italian. His eclogue, *Tirsi*, like Bibbiena's much more noteworthy comedy, *Calandria*, was written for the pastime of that festive and lettered society.

Any historical description of the Court of Urbino has been rendered vain by Castiglione's enduring portrait of it. No doubt but he heightened the reality: he was an artist, not an annalist, and sought to embody the most brilliant qualities of Renaissance Court life in one convincing model. But he was sincere in his opinion that the Court of Urbino excelled all other Italian courts; he was probably also right. The more famous assembly that was brought together by Lorenzo the Magnificent included in its number greater names: Pulci, Ficino, Pico, Poliziano. The individual discourses of these men were probably more weighty than any pronounced at Urbino. But the atmosphere of social ease, the free wit, and 'sweet conversation that

is occasioned of an amiable and loving company' might be better tasted at Urbino than in a society consisting mainly of savants. Many of the smaller Italian Courts were given over to that 'lightness and vanity', foppery and dissipation, which is censured by Castiglione in his Fourth Book. The later Court of Leo X at Rome was no pattern of a well-knit society. It was a shrewd remark of Dr. Johnson's that manners are best learned at a small Court: 'You are admitted 'with great facility to the prince's company, and yet 'must treat him with much respect. . . . The best 'book that ever was written upon good breeding, *Il* '*Cortegiano*, by Castiglione, grew up at the little Court 'of Urbino, and you should read it.'[1] In short, the actual Court of Urbino was singularly free from the pedantry of a literary society, and from the venality and intrigue of a market for talent. The credit for this is due in great measure to Federigo, the first Duke, the true founder of the greatness of Urbino. He had reigned, as Count and Duke, for nearly forty years (1444–82), had built the palace, collected therein a priceless library, bestowed his patronage freely on artists and men of letters, and spent his considerable revenues largely on the furtherance of scholarship and education. His early tutor, Vittorino da Feltre, had trained him at Mantua under a system of education well adapted to foster the harmony of faculties which Castiglione requires in his Courtier.[2] Something also

[1] *Boswell*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, v. 270. But Johnson does scant justice to the book when he says that its object is 'to teach the minuter 'decencies and inferiour duties, to regulate the practice of daily con- 'versation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous 'than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce 'no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation'. (*Works*, vii. 428.) This is true of Della Casa's *Galateo*, but not of Castiglione's COURTIER.

[2] See W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators*, Cambridge, 1897. The history of Urbino is fully narrated by James Dennistoun, in his *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, 3 vols., London, 1851—a useful, painstaking, diffuse, old-gentlemanly work.

of the character of the Court was impressed upon it by the gravity and authority of the Duchess, Elizabeth Gonzaga, whose presence checked wrangling, tempered laughter, and set bounds to witty licence. If the conversations recorded in Boccaccio, or Bandello (some of whose novels were first told, he says, in just such another company), or in the *Heptameron* of Margaret of Navarre, be compared to those of THE COURTIER, the seriousness and moral bias of the Court of Urbino will be very easily felt. Castiglione dwells repeatedly on the love and reverence inspired in her lieges by the Duchess; and when, in his Prefatory Epistle, he records her death, it is with a sudden movement of sorrow that almost breaks into a cry.

When Guidobaldo died, and Francesco Maria della Rovere, his nephew and adopted son, succeeded, Castiglione continued in the service of the Duchy. That same year the League of Cambray was formed against the power of Venice, the new Duke was Captain-General of the Papal army, and Castiglione, with his usual command of fifty men, was soon busy in the assault and capture of border fortresses. The Venetians succeeded in holding Padua, and the Pope, changing his tactics, suddenly threw himself into opposition to the French. Castiglione was present at the complete rout of the Papal troops when the French

His criticism of Castiglione is worthless. He finds the Duchess and the Lady Emilia Pia to be lacking in true delicacy, and describes the conversations at which they assist as 'prurient twaddle'. Here is the book: let the discerning reader judge. The influence of THE COURTIER he thinks was 'fraught with evil': 'In the pages of that 'essay were first embodied precepts of tact, lessons of adulation, all 'repugnant to the stern manners and wholesome independence of 'antecedent generations.' This of a book which won praise for its moral teaching from so grim a censor as Roger Ascham. It would be interesting to learn where, in Renaissance Italy, the stern manners and wholesome independence corruptible by THE COURTIER were to be found. But there are no lengths to which the sleepy habit of irrelevant edification will not carry its victims.

took Bologna in 1511. Thereafter Francesco Maria was deprived by the Pope, and accused of treason by the Cardinal Alidosio, whom he straightway killed with his own hand. Castiglione accompanied him on his penitential journey to Rome to seek pardon from the Pope. The Duke was re-established in his dukedom; and when in the following year he had vindicated his good faith by some military successes against the French in Romagna, he was presented with the fief of Pesaro. Castiglione, in his turn, as reward for his services, received from the Duke the fortress of Nuvillaria, which he describes in an exultant letter to his mother, written in the end of January 1513. 'May 'God of his grace,' he concludes, 'permit me to enjoy 'it with content.'

His enjoyment was to be brief. In February Julius II died, and Castiglione, in the suite of his master, was present in Rome at the election of Leo X. The anxiety of Leo to provide for the scions of the house of Medici was a source of constant disquiet to other families: as a measure of precaution, Castiglione was left to represent the Duke at the Papal Court. It was during this prolonged residence in Rome that he formed or renewed friendships with Raphael, Michael Angelo, Bembo, Sadoleto, Giulio Romano, and others of the artists and men of letters at the Court of Leo. For a time he held the position successfully, and kept the Papal greed at bay. He was even formally invested by Leo as Count of Nuvillaria, in a document which declares his vigils and toils to be deserving of a richer reward. But in March 1516 Giuliano dei Medici (the 'Lord Julian' of *The Courtyer*, brother to the Pope, and a good friend to the house of Urbino) died, and Leo, free now from the last restraint, prepared to seize upon the Duchy for his nephew Lorenzo. The neutrality of François I was already bespoken, the old accusations of treason

and murder were raked up again, Francesco Maria was summoned to Rome, and when he failed to appear, in spite of all the efforts of Castiglione and the widowed Duchess, who attended to plead his cause, he was excommunicated and deprived. The Papal troops took possession of Urbino, the Duke fled to Mantua, and the ambassador lost his estate of Nuvillaria with that 'fair prospect over sea and land' on which his eyes had seldom rested.

In the meantime he had married Ippolita, daughter of Count Guido Torello di Montechiarugolo. Sundry earlier schemes of marriage, proposed by himself or others, had come to nothing. He had been suitor for a daughter of Count Girardo Rangone; but when her father hesitated, he broke off the negotiations with a highly characteristic burst of pride: 'The wife that 'I am to take, be she who she may, I desire that she 'should be given to me with as good a will as I take 'her withal, yea, if she were the daughter of a king.' We find him in Venice, with his wife and sisters, in 1517, entertained and honoured by the Doge. Two years later he entered the service of Federigo, son and successor to his early master, the Marquis of Mantua, and again returned to Rome in an ambassadorial capacity, to solicit the Captain-Generalship of the Church for the Marquis. The mission was no delight to him: it separated him from his wife; and when, on 7 April 1520, Raphael died, Rome seemed no longer the same place.[1] In August his wife died, leaving him three children, and in December Leo X was taken off, as Castiglione alleges, by poison. He continued to represent Mantua at the Courts of Adrian VI and Clement VII; his good offices were freely lent to get Francesco Maria reinstated; but although this was achieved, he did not regain his

[1] Raphael painted at least two portraits of Castiglione; one of them is in the Louvre.

own Nuvillaria. When the opposition between the Emperor and François I grew to overshadow the politics of Europe, he was intrusted with his last and most difficult embassy by Clement VII, who begged him from the Marquis of Mantua, and sent him as Apostolic Nuncio to the Court of Charles V at Madrid.

To serve one master loyally and to speak truth to him without fear or favour had been Castiglione's practice throughout his career.[1] As like as not, Pope Clement had been attracted to him by his frankness and honesty: two qualities which exercise a singular fascination over men incapable of either. But it is a desperate blunder for a double-dealer to imagine that he can make an efficient tool of an honest man. He cannot, for the simple and profoundly ironic reason that he cannot bring himself to trust him. The difficulty of Castiglione's mission may be judged from the fact that on his way to Madrid he was commissioned to visit the camp at Pavia with secret messages to the French King. Arrived in Spain in March 1525, he heard news of the victory which made Charles master of Europe. He presented to the Emperor the congratulations of Clement, and on behalf of the Holy See urged him to undertake a war against the infidel, an invitation to which Charles responded with vague and pious sentiments.

From this time forth to the end of his life his position at the Court of Spain was doubly futile. The instructions received from Rome were scanty. Believing in the good intentions of the Pope towards Charles, and of Charles towards the Pope, he laboured, in perfect good faith, to deceive them both. His own hopes and efforts were sincerely and ardently directed

[1] 'We must praie unto God, answered Calmeta, to helpe us to 'good, for whan wee are once with them, wee muste take them with 'all theyr faultes, for infinite respectes constraine a gentleman after 'he is once entred into service with a Lorde, not to forsake him.'—*The Courtyer*, p. 129.

to the maintenance of European peace and the good estate of the Catholic Church. When Clement made open alliance with France and Venice, he poured out the bitterness of his heart in a letter to the Archbishop of Capua. There is nothing for it now, he says, but war, which is 'the natural desire of the Most Christian 'King, who seeks for himself glory, and for things past 'revenge'. When the Pope upbraided Charles with troubling the peace of the world by refusing to ally himself with the Holy See, Charles replied by asking for a general Council, before which he might lay his case. His chief desire, he said, was for peace and reconciliation with Clement, 'and this', writes the unfortunate ambassador, 'he affirmed more empha-'tically than ever, and with an oath, so that I should 'be ashamed not to believe him'. Charles, he adds, has such candour and benevolence, that God could never permit malice to be veiled beneath so fair a cloak.

He continued in this simple belief up to the eve of the sack of Rome. And when, in May 1527, the Constable Bourbon, who certainly knew the mind of the Emperor, stormed the holy city, Castiglione was a discredited and broken man. He had to defend himself from the reproaches of his master, and reminded him in a piteous letter of his unflagging devotion. 'Many may surpass me in wisdom and 'ability,' he pleads, 'but none in affection and good 'will, wherefore, since my fault is a fault of nature, 'which has made me what I am, I should the more 'easily be pardoned; the rather that I acknowledge 'and confess my shortcomings.' The fact is that he was no match for the accomplished dissimulation of the Emperor, who deluded him with all the greater ease by expressing what was a genuine affection and regard for the nuncio himself. His few remaining years were embittered by a controversy with Alfonso de Valdez, a light of the early Reformation, who

recognized the visible judgment of God in the disasters of the other side.[1] It seems highly unlikely that Paolo Giovio and Guicciardini are right in asserting that Castiglione accepted the bishopric of Avila from Charles, and was installed. It may have been offered him, for it was vacant during the last year of his life. He died, after a short illness, at Toledo, on February 7, 1529. The Emperor ordered him a magnificent funeral in the church of Sant' Elifonso, whence, a year and a half later, his bones were removed to the chapel of the Madonna delle Grazie at Mantua. They lie beneath a red marble monument of Giulio Romano, whom Castiglione himself had introduced to Mantua. The tomb bears an elaborate, frigid inscription by Bembo, as well as Castiglione's simple and touching lines on his wife. There is no doubt that the Emperor sincerely lamented the death of his friend and dupe. 'I tell you,' he is reported to have said, 'one of the finest gentlemen in the world is dead.' ('Yo vos digo que es muerto uno de los mejores caballeros del mundo.') And tradition has it that his favourite books, to the end of his life, were the *Histories* of Polybius, the *Prince* of Machiavel, and THE COURTIER of Castiglione.

It was in 1508, while the savour of the virtues of Duke Guidobaldo was fresh in his mind (to quote his own statement), that Castiglione sketched, 'in a few days', the first rough draft of his masterpiece. Twenty years elapsed before it saw the light. The troubles and wars of the time of Francesco Maria doubtless impeded the progress of the work, and caused the author to lay it aside for a time. He took it up again in earnest during his leisure at Rome. The Fourth

[1] A full account of this controversy is contained in the *Life and Writings of Juan de Valdes*, by Benjamin B. Wiffen (Quaritch, 1865). The tract on the sack of Rome, written by Juan, was attributed by Castiglione to Alfonso, who did not disclaim it. Hence much confusion.

Book may be dated with some accuracy: in the beginning the death of Cesare Gonzaga (who died in 1512) is lamented, and the dignity conferred on Ottaviano Fregoso (he was Doge of Genoa from 1513 to 1515) is also recorded. Giuliano dei Medici, on the other hand, who died in 1516, is numbered, in the same passage, among the living. The book as we have it was probably completed not later than the spring of 1516, at Rome. It was yet far from the press. Where so many of the living were introduced, and made to speak their minds, the author was naturally anxious to submit his work to the judgment of his friends. In 1518 he sent it to Bembo, Sadoleto, and Monsignore di Bajus, inviting their criticisms. Their answers miscarried, or were delayed, and Castiglione, who took pleasure in shaping and re-shaping the thing, was glad of an excuse for further delay. But no precautions of his were sufficient to arrest a growing private circulation by transcription. When he was in Spain, he was vexed to hear that the Lady Vittoria Colonna had been specially active in procuring copies to be made and circulated in Naples. He wrote to her, reproaching her in a fine strain of courteous irony with her violated pledge of secrecy. 'I am the more 'deeply obliged to your Ladyship,' he says, 'because 'the necessity you have put me under of sending the 'book at once to the printer relieves me from the 'trouble of adding many things which I had already 'prepared in my mind,—things, I need hardly say, of 'little import, like the rest of the book; so that your 'Ladyship has saved the reader from weariness, and 'the author from blame.' THE COURTIER was printed in folio at Venice in 1528,[1] and at once began its rapid conquest of Italy and Europe.

[1] *Il Cortegiano del Conte Baldesar Castiglione. . . . In Venezia nelle case di Aldo Romano di Andrea d'Asola suo suocero nell' anno* MDXXVIII *del mese di Aprile.* The subsequent Italian Editions are legion.

Everywhere it came as a herald of that potent Italian influence which was to transform the art and letters of other countries. The credit of introducing Italian models into Spain belongs to Juan Boscán of Barcelona and to his friend and fellow-poet Garcilaso de la Vega.[1] Boscán, it is said, met Andrea Navagiero, ambassador to Spain from Venice, at Granada in 1526; and being by him persuaded to attempt the Italian forms of versification, produced the earliest Spanish experiments in the sonnet, the canzone, *terza rima*, blank verse, and the octave stanza. None of his adventures in this kind was published until 1543, when his works were collected for the press by his widow. But his translation of The Courtier was issued during his lifetime. The book had been sent to him, soon after it appeared in Italy, by Garcilaso, who, as a friend of Bembo and a frequenter of the Spanish Court, must have known its author intimately. Boscán's Spanish version appeared in 1540, with prefatory epistles by the translator and Garcilaso.[2] In France, as in Spain, The Courtier found a godfather among the most brilliant of the men of the Renaissance. It was translated by Jacques Colin, secretary to King François I, and revised by the ill-fated scholar Etienne Dolet, who commends it to his friend Mellin de Saint-Gelais in a prefatory epistle.[3] When the diction of this version

[1] See James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *A History of Spanish Literature* (1898), pp. 138–9: who notes that Boscán's *Cortesano*, done from Garcilaso's gift to him of the First Edition, is 'a triumph of rendering' and 'an almost perfect performance'.

[2] *Libro Llamado el Cortesano: traduzido nuevamente en nuestro vulgar Castellano por Boscan*, MDXL. The prefatory epistles are addressed, 'A la muy Magnifica Señora doña Geronima Palova de Almogavar'. Both poets were in high esteem in Elizabethan England. Abraham France in *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (1588) takes most of his modern examples from 'Courtly makers'—Tasso, Du Bartas, Sir Philip Sidney, Boscán, and Garcilaso furnishing the largest number of quotations.

[3] *Le Courtisan de Messire Baltazar de Castillon. Nouvellement reveu et corrige. . . . Imprime de nouveau a Lyon par Francoys Juste demourant*

became antiquated, Gabriel Chapuis, who succeeded Belleforest in his double quality of Historiographer-Royal and jack-of-all-work, published another and much inferior translation at Lyons in 1580.[1] Last of all, but still in the van of the Italian movement, THE COURTIER crossed the Channel and became an Englishman. The translator was a pioneer of Italian studies in England; his book, reprinted again and again, became one of the most influential books of the ensuing age—the age of Shakespeare and Spenser and Sidney. Piety demands that what can be learned of his life should be here recorded.

II

Thomas Hoby[2] was born in 1530, the son of William Hoby of Leominster, by his second wife Katherine Forden. In 1545 he matriculated at Cambridge, entering St. John's College, at that time the glory of

devant la grant porte nostre Dame de Consort. Lan 1538. Dolet alludes to an earlier Edition of this version; and the printer in his dedication to 'Monseigneur Monsieur du Peirat, Lieutenant-General pour le Roy a Lyon', mentions a rival translation, newly published at Paris, 'in thick, heavy characters, such as have not been used this long time 'for printing good authors'. A desire to please the King, who is so highly praised by Castiglione under his earlier title 'Monseigneur d'Angoulesme', may explain this tumbling of translators over one another's necks.

[1] *Le Parfait Courtisan du Comte Baltasar Castillonois, Es deux langues, respondans par deux colomnes, l'une à l'autre. . . . De la traduction de Gabriel Chapuys, Tourangeau. A Lyon, Pour Loys Cloquemin,* 1580. The printer, Thibauld Ancelin, dates his colophon 1579. There are several later Editions.

[2] Short lives of Hoby are to be found in Cooper's *Athenae* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Neither makes any use of the principal authority, the bulky manuscript autograph diary in the British Museum, entitled *A Booke of the Travaile and lief of me Thomas Hoby, with diverse things woorth the notinge*. This diary covers the years of Hoby's life from 1547, when he first went abroad, to 1564, two years before his death. The entries after 1555 are scanty, and chiefly personal. For its historical value, if for nothing else, the Diary certainly deserves to be set in print. It is the chief source of the

the University, a chief stronghold of scholarship and Protestant theology: 'Yea, St. John's did then so 'flourish, as Trinity College, that princely house now, 'at the first erection was but *colonia deducta* out of 'St. John's.'[1] The College was 'an Universitie within 'it selfe: shining so farre above all other Houses, 'Halls and Hospitalls whatsoever, that no Colledge in 'the Towne was able to compare with the tythe of 'her Students'.[2] While Hoby was in residence at St. John's, Trinity was founded, and John Redman, a noted Johnian scholar, was appointed the first Master. At the same time Roger Ascham was made Public Orator. Perhaps the young student, well recommended by all the points of character and breeding which are required in *The Scholemaster*, made his first acquaintance with Ascham at this time. Perhaps he came under the notice of two other members of the College, Thomas Lever, afterwards Master of St. John's, and James Pilkington, afterwards Bishop of Durham; doubtless he was awed by the fame of 'the Exchequer of Eloquence, Sir John Cheke, a man of men, supernaturally traded in all tongues'. These are conjectures; with the end of his college course his diary and certainty begin. His time at Cambridge was cut short in order that he might the sooner enter upon that course of travel and study in foreign countries which was beginning to be held a necessary part of the education of a statesman. In conformity with the approved practice he sought a Protestant centre before venturing himself among the enticements of Circe. He arrived in Strasburg on the 16th of October 1547, and found quarters in the house

ensuing life of Hoby. That insatiable academic patriot, Anthony à Wood, claims Hoby for Oxford. But, in fact, Hoby is like Proserpine: 'His foot the Cumner cowslips never stirred.'

[1] *The Scholemaster*, in Ascham's *Works*, ed. Giles (1865), iii, p. 235.

[2] Nashe, Epistle *To the Gentleman Students of both Universities* prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589).

of Martin Bucer, 'a man of no less integrity and pureness of lyving then of fame and learning'. 'Him 'heard I,' he writes, 'in the Schooles in Divinity, and 'sometime Peter Martir, Sturmius in humanity, Paulus 'Fagius in Hebrew.' Strasburg was on the highroad to the South, and from time to time Hoby's curiosity and interest were awakened by the reports of travellers from Italy. In January 1548 he records that 'W^m 'Thomas came this waye owt of Italye towarde 'Englande. Also Sir Thomas Wyat arrived here to 'go towarde Italye.' It is pleasant to connect his name, even in this passing fashion, with the first English historian of Italy,[1] and with the son of the more famous importer of the Sonnet. His own earliest literary work, undertaken out of reverence to his host and teacher, was not sonneteering: 'When Bucer had 'finished the litle treatyse he made unto the Churche 'of Englande . . . I translated it ymmediatlie into 'Englishe, and sent it to my Brother, where it was 'put in print.'[2] The author meanwhile, having stablished himself in learning and the Protestant faith by his winter's residence at Strasburg, took his way into Italy, proceeding at once to Venice, where the ambassador's house was the resort of many English travellers.

In Venice and Padua, with occasional expeditions to Mantua and Ferrara, he remained for a year. Like all the scholarly travellers of those times, not excepting the facetious Coryat, he is much concerned with monu-

[1] *The historie of Italie, a boke excedyng profitable to be redde: because it entreateth of the astate of many and divers common weales, how thei have ben, and now be governed.* 4to. 1549. Thomas also wrote an Italian grammar, and a defence of King Henry VIII. His treatise of the Vanity of this World and another of the Apparel of Women are lost.

[2] *The gratulation of M. Martin Bucer . . . unto the Churche of Englande for the restitucion of Christes religion, and his Answere made unto the two raylinge epistles of Steven Bishoppe of Winchester concerning the unmaried state of priestes and cloysterars.* 8vo. Lond. [1549].

ments, epitaphs, and traditions of classical heroes. He visits Livy's tomb, and remarks that the epitaph of Antenor, the legendary founder of Padua, 'doth not seem to be of anie probable authoritie on antiquitie'. Of course he studied at the University. 'I applied 'myself,' he says, 'as well to obtain the Italiane tunge 'as to have a farther entrance in the Latin. The 'most famous in this towne' [Padua] 'was Lazarus 'Bonamicus in humanitie, whose lectures I visited 'sumtimes.' More than two years later, passing through Bassano, the birthplace of Bonamicus, he remembers to pay tribute: 'Here in our dayes was 'born the famous Clarke in letters of humanitie, 'Lazarus Bonamicus, stipended reader in the Schooles 'of Padoa of the Greeke and Latin tunge by the 'Siniory of Venice with a great stipend'—words which put it out of doubt that Bonamicus was remarkable among men of his craft. But although he plied his book diligently, Hoby had an eye for the manners and life of the South. He saw Venice in her splendour, while she was yet a great sovereign power, a city aglow with colour, vibrating with the joy of life, tempestuous with passion and with crime. He witnessed the annual espousals celebrated between the city and the sea, whereunto there came the Duke and Duchess of Urbino,[1] and were received into the vessel of triumph called the *Bucentoro*. It must have been for Hoby, as for other English travellers, a dazzling change to pass from the sober community at Strasburg into the midst of this carnival of the senses and the blood. Ascham was in Italy nine days, 'and yet', he says, 'I saw in 'that little time, in one city, more liberty to sin, than 'ever I heard tell of in our noble city of London in 'nine year. I saw it was there as free to sin, not only

[1] Guidobaldo II of the Della Rovere family. He was newly married to his second Duchess, Vittoria Farnese, sister to the Cardinal. Hoby's memory of the scene prompted the marginal note on p. 165.

'without all punishment, but also without any man's 'marking, as it is free in the city of London, to chose 'without all blame, whether a man lust to wear shoe 'or pantocle.'[1] His words are vividly illustrated by Hoby's account, given in statesmanlike fashion, without comment, of an incident that befell during the Shrovetide festival in 1549: 'There came to Venice, 'to see the Citie, the Lustie yong duke of Ferrandine 'well accompanied with noblemen and gentlemen; 'where he with his companions in Campo San Stefano 'shewed great sporte and meerye pastime to the 'Gentlemen and Gentlewomen of Venice, both on 'horsbacke in running at the ring with faire Turks 'and Cowrsars, being in a maskerie after the Turkishe 'maner, and on foote casting of eggs into the windowes 'among the Ladies, full of sweet waters and damask 'poulders. At night, after all this Triumphe, in a 'Bankett made purposelie at Mowrano, a litle owt of 'Venice, by the Siniorye to honor him withall, he was 'slaine by a varlett belonging to a gentleman of the 'Citie. The occasion was this: The Duke cumming 'in a brave maskerye with his companions went (as the 'maner is) to a gentlewoman whom he most fansied 'among all the rest (being assembled there together 'a l. or lx.). This gentlewoman was wyffe to one 'M. Michael Venier. There came in another com-'panye of Gentlemen Venetiens in another maskerie: 'and one of them went in like maner to the same 'gentlewoman that the Duke was entreating to daunse 'with him, and somwhat shuldered the Duke, which 'was a great injurie. Upon that, the Duke thrust 'him from him. The gentleman owt with his Dagger 'and gave him a strooke above the short ribbes with 'the point, but it did him no hurt, bicause he had on 'a jacke of maile. The Duke ymmediatlie feelinge 'the point of his dagger, drue his rapire, whereupon

[1] *The Scholemaster*, in Ascham's *Works*, ed. Giles, iii, p. 163.

'the gentleman fledde into a chambere there at hand 'and shutt the dore to him. And as the Duke was 'shovinge to gete the dore open, a varlett of the 'gentlemannes came behinde him, and with a *pistolese*' [i.e. a short broadsword] 'gave him his deathes wound 'and clove his heade in such sort as the one side honge 'over his shoulder by a litle skynne. He lyved abowt 'two dayes after this stroke. There was no justice 'had against this gentleman, but after he had a while 'absented himself from the Citie the matter was for-'gotten. The varlett fledd, and was no more heard 'of. This Gentleman was of the house of Giustiniani 'in Venice.'

Towards the end of August 1549 Hoby went forward into Tuscany. After staying at Florence a few days to see the principal buildings and to visit Valdarno, he reached Siena, a place where 'the people are much 'geven to entertaine strangers gentlie', and where 'most of the women are well learned, and write 'excellentlie well both in prose and verse'. The city was less happy in its political conditions. Owing to the internecine jealousies of the inhabitants, who were divided into four distinct parties, the Emperor and the French King were frequently solicited to intervene, and usually accepted the invitation. Hoby arrived to find the place in charge of a garrison of six hundred Spanish soldiers, commanded by Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Governor of Siena, and Ambassador from the Emperor to the Pope. Under Spanish military rule, murder and privy feuds were no longer permitted to run riot in the town; no one, whether native or stranger, was allowed to carry weapons; so that the garrison was soon cordially detested even by the party that had brought it in. When Hoby's arrival was known, he was at once invited to dine at the Governor's palace, and to bring with him any Englishmen who might chance to be in the town. Some stern non-

conformists among the English refused to go, but Hoby and four others who accepted the Governor's hospitality were 'greatlie feasted, and gentlie enterteyned'. So the young Englishman who was to translate THE COURTIER talked and sat at meat with this great and famous Spaniard. In Hurtado de Mendoza, soldier and courtier and diplomatist, poet and historian, Arabist and Hellenist, perhaps the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and so the 'only true begetter', so far as modern Europe is concerned, of the picaresque novel, the Spanish Renaissance was incarnate.[1] At this banquet Hoby made acquaintance also with the Marquis of Capistrano, who later showed him the greatest kindness and courtesy at Amalfi and Naples. Throughout his travels he observed that prudent counsel, quoted by Sir Henry Wotton for Milton's guidance, which enjoins an open countenance and a guarded speech.

It were too long to tell in detail the history of his subsequent travels. He hurried from Siena to Rome that he might be present in the city during the election of a Pope. Castiglione had left Rome a quarter of a century before Hoby set foot in it, yet there was still the veteran Michael Angelo, entrusted with the

[1] See *A History of Spanish Literature*, by James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *passim*. Hoby may well have conversed with his host in English, for it is now demonstrated that Hurtado de Mendoza, as was long suspected, knew England well. He was sent over here as Special Envoy to arrange a marriage between the Princess Mary Tudor and Dom Luiz de Portugal; and, later, he was here for fifteen months, from 23 May 1537 to 1 September 1538, to conduct the negotiations for a marriage between Henry VIII and Dorothea of Denmark, Duchess of Milan, niece to the Emperor. For this information I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, who refers me to the *Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. xiii, parts 1 and 2, and to the *Spanish State Papers* (1537–8), edited by Pascual de Gayangos, and remarks that, as Chapuys was the regular Imperial Ambassador in London at that time, and Mendoza's embassy failed, historians have passed over the affair in silence.

ordering of the Papal obsequies. From Rome he sailed to Naples, and very narrowly escaped being taken by Moorish or Turkish pirates. Here his travelling companions, 'Mr. Barker, Mr. Parker, and Mr. Whithorn', with whom he had journeyed from Siena, took ship for Sicily, while he held on by land through Calabria: 'bothe to have a sight of the country, and 'also to absent myself for a while owt of Englishe-'mennes companie for the tungs sake.' Wherever he went he fell in with English travellers or adventurers. It is instructive to read Hoby's account, written some forty years before the Armada, of his meeting with an English gunner, employed on board a Neapolitan vessel, or with another, a certain Master Richard Lucas, who was serving in a Maltese galley at Syracuse. Hoby had intended to visit Malta, but Master Lucas dissuaded him, alleging, like a good English gunner, that there was nothing worth seeing there except the knights, of whom, he added, there was good store on board his own galley.

In May 1550 Hoby was back in Rome again, to settle himself to study. But his half-brother, Sir Philip Hoby, who was twenty-five years older than Thomas, and would appear to have acted as his guardian, was ambassador to the Emperor at Augsburg, and sent word for Thomas to go thither with all convenient speed. The autumn was spent in Augsburg; here Hoby translated *The Tragedie of Free Will*, which he afterwards dedicated to the Marquis of Northampton. When Sir Richard Morison, taking Ascham with him as his secretary, superseded Sir Philip as ambassador, the two brothers returned to England with a great train of men and horses; and on Christmas Day, 1550, Thomas Hoby was introduced to the Court of King Edward. He was twenty years of age, and had been absent from England almost three years and a half.

During the rest of the reign of Edward VI he was servant to William, Marquis of Northampton. This service took him abroad again in the train of the Marquis, who was one of the Lords High Commissioners for concluding a marriage between Edward VI and Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of the French King. Among the gentlemen whom Hoby names as accompanying the commission to Nantes and Chateaubriand, were Mr. Nicholas Throgmorton, Mr. Henry Sidney, and Sir Gilbert Dethick, Garter King at Arms. William Thomas was secretary to the commission, and Thomas Lever chaplain to the Marquis. There were stately public ceremonies at Nantes; at Chateaubriand the pastimes were tennis, shooting, hunting of the boar, 'palla malla', and wrestling matches between Bretons and Cornishmen. Every night there was dancing in the great hall, and sometimes music in the king's privy chamber. On his return to England, Hoby found the Court almost deserted by reason of the sweating sickness. Among the new-made knights of the autumn were Sir Henry Sidney, Sir William Cecil, and Sir John Cheke. After the execution of the Duke of Somerset, Sir Philip Hoby was dispatched to Flanders on a state errand, and Thomas, who had been troubled with a quartan ague, caught by assiduous attendance at Hampton Court, remained at home. It is at this time, in the spring of 1552, that we first hear of the translation of THE COURTIER: 'I returned 'again to London the xxvi. of April, after I had bene 'ridd of mine ague; where I prepared myselfe to goo 'into Fraunce and there to applie my booke for 'a season. . . . After I had convayed my stuff to Paris 'and settled myself there, the first thing I did was to 'translate into Englishe the third booke of the Courti-'san, which my ladie marquess[1] had often willed me

[1] She was Elizabeth Brooke, daughter to George, fourth Lord Cobham, and second wife to the Marquis.

'to do and for lacke of time ever differred it. And 'from thense I sent unto Sr. Henry Sidney the 'Epitome of the Italian tunge which I drue out there 'for him. This done, Mr. Henry Kingsmeale and 'I applied ourselves to the reading of the institutes 'of the civill lawe, being bothe lodged in a house 'together.'[1] After the winter spent in this manner, Hoby joined his brother at Brussels, whither, on July the 11th, there came the news of the death of King Edward.

The accession of Mary was a heavy blow to Hoby and his immediate circle of friends. The Marquis of Northampton was deprived and imprisoned. William Thomas was hanged for his part in the affair of Lady Jane Grey. Most of Hoby's distinguished acquaintance thought it best to go abroad for a time. Sir Philip himself took leave of absence, for his health's sake, and the two brothers started for Italy, reaching Padua in August 1554. There they fell in with other English exiles, and thenceforward they travelled and spent their time in company with Sir Thomas Wroth, Sir Anthony Cooke, and Sir John Cheke. Padua was much frequented by the English, as the extant records of the University show; it is probably to this time that Wilson alludes in his prefatory epistle to the *Three Orations of Demosthenes* (1570), where he records his debt to Cheke: 'Thinking of my being with him 'in Italie in that famous Universitie of Padua, I did 'cal to minde his care that he had over all the Englishe

[1] It must not be inferred from Hoby's use of the word 'Courtisan' that he translated from the French. There is no evidence in his book of any use made of Dolet's Edition. That translation has many omissions, where Hoby has none. The places where the two translators deviate from the original do not coincide; and where the French and Italian idioms both admit of a close rendering in good English, Hoby follows the Italian. See *The Epistle of the Translator* (p. 11), where he complains of omissions by 'some interpreters of this booke into other languages'.

'men there, to go to their bokes, and how gladly he 'did reade to me and others certaine Orations of 'Demosthenes in Greeke, the interpretation wherof 'I and they had then from his mouth. . . . I thinke 'there was never olde Priest more perfite in his 'Porteise, nor supersticious Monke in our Ladies 'Psalter, as they call it, nor yet good Preacher in the 'Bible or testament, than this man was in Demo-'sthenes.' Sir John was also profoundly skilled, says Wilson, in the English tongue, so that Hoby may have made use of his advice in the completion of *The Courtyer*. For it was during this winter, in all likelihood, that the task was finished. 'The writing begun 'the xviiith of November,' says the diarist, 'I ended 'the ixth of Februarie folowinge.'

That this writing was the translation of the Book of the Courtier seems hardly open to question. The translation must have been finished early in Mary's reign. When the printer, William Seres, addresses his greeting to the reader, in the Edition of 1561, he remarks that the book would have been set forth long since, 'but that there were certain places in it whiche 'of late yeares beeing misliked of some, that had the 'perusing of it (with what reason judge thou), the 'Authour thought it much better to keepe it in darknes 'a while, then to put it in light unperfect and in 'peecemeale to serve the time'. This can mean only one thing. The witty licence of many of Castiglione's anecdotes, wherein dignitaries of the Roman Church are satirized, was not displeasing to the Rome of Leo X or Clement VII; but after the formidable rise of Protestantism, the friends of the old Church saw these things in a different and more serious light. In Italy itself the book was mangled and expurgated. The Edition of 1766 by the Abate Pierantonio Serassi furnishes perhaps the most lamentable example. The story of the 'religious person' and the five nuns

(narrated with unholy glee by Bayle) disappears. So does the witticism (p. 172) concerning the appointed form of prayer to be used for cardinals. 'Tua Roma', in the leonine verses on p. 171, becomes 'locus iste'. Don Giovanni di Cardona (p. 181) becomes 'un certo Lepido', who directs his scoff against the wicked emperors of old time. Raphael's jest (p. 184) is attributed to an anonymous artist of ancient Rome, and the blushes of St. Peter and St. Paul are blushed by Romulus and Remus! Even the foolish countryman who compared his venerable goat to St. Paul (p. 163) is made to seek a more fitting comparison in the person of Socrates. Had Hoby's book been printed in the reign of Mary, some sort of expurgation would certainly have been necessary. It is to his credit, whether his conscientious motives were Protestant or literary, that he refused to mangle his translation in order to serve the time.

The brothers travelled back to England in the autumn of 1555, passing through Frankfort, where they found a community of exiled English Protestants with 'a churche graunted them to preache in'. During the Marian persecutions they lived quietly on their estates at Evesham and Bisham. To the latter place, at midsummer 1557, there came as visitors Sir William and Lady Cecil, and Elizabeth Cooke, daughter to Sir Anthony Cooke and sister to Lady Cecil. When they left, Sir Philip went to Bath to take the waters, while Thomas remained at Bisham to see the new building there go forward. In the following spring Sir Philip's life was despaired of; he went to London to make his will, and there Thomas saw him for the last time. 'The xi of Maii,' he writes, 'I came to London, being sent for to set my 'hand to a recognisance, and retourned again the xiii, 'taking my way by Wimbleton, where I communed 'with Mrs. Elizabeth Cooke in the way of marriage.'

The death of Sir Philip, in May 1558, left Thomas, as perhaps he had foreseen, in possession of Bisham; he was married in June to Elizabeth Cooke, and they passed the summer with the Cecils at Burghley.

His wife must have more than a passing mention, for the virtues and learning of Sir Anthony Cooke were eclipsed by the virtues and learning of his five daughters, whom he made skilful in the Greek and Latin. The eldest, Mildred, married Sir William Cecil; the second, Anne, married Sir Nicholas Bacon, and so became the mother of Francis Bacon; the third, Elizabeth, became Lady Hoby; the fourth, Margaret, married Sir Ralph Rowlet; the fifth, Katharine, married Sir Ralph Killigrew. The weddings of Elizabeth and Margaret were celebrated on the same day, an event which drew from Dr. Walter Haddon one of his too numerous essays in Latin verse.[1] After the death of Hoby, Lady Hoby married Lord John Russell: she lived to write Latin epitaphs on both her husbands, and to be the literary adviser and friend of Sir John Harington, who made use of her intercession to avert the wrath that his ingenious and ill-famed *Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596) had awakened in high places.

The remainder of Hoby's diary is concerned chiefly with the children born to him,[2] and the guests entertained at Bisham. One entry is of a wider significance. On November the 5th, 1560, he went to London for

[1] *In Nuptias Rodolphi Rouleti et Thomae Hobaei, qui duas D. Antonii Coci filias duxere uxores eodem die*, in Thomas Hatcher's Edition (1567) of Haddon's Orations, Epistles, and Poems, printed by William Seres. Haddon's circle of friends and acquaintances coincided very closely with Hoby's; he has letters addressed to Sir John Cheke, Sir Thomas Smith, and Sturmius (to whom he was introduced by Ascham); with obituary verses on Cheke, Bucer, and the Countess of Northampton (who suggested to Hoby his task); as well as poems to Thomas Norton, Thomas Wilson, and Ascham

[2] Edward, in 1560; Elizabeth, in 1562; Katharine, in 1564. Both daughters died in early childhood. His second son, Thomas Postumus, was born after Hoby's death in 1566.

a stay of thirteen weeks, doubtless for the purpose of seeing his book through the press. Its comparative freedom from misprints makes it likely that he was a frequent visitor, during these weeks, to 'the Signe of the Hedghogge' at the west end of St. Paul's Churchyard. There William Seres, who from his choice of a sign is thought to have been an old servant of the Sidney family,[1] had carried on his labours for some ten years. His output was chiefly Protestant theology, and his most notable excursion into the realm of polite letters was made when the Stationers' Company, some time between 30th November 1560 and 8th March 1561, 'Recevyd of master Serys for 'his lycense for pryntinge of a boke Called Curtyssye' the sum of twelve pence.

The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio appeared in 1561 with a commendatory sonnet by Thomas Sackville, and a letter of Sir John Cheke's, wherein the right principles of translation into English are authoritatively laid down. This letter was written in 1557, when *The Epistle of the Translator* was first submitted to Sir John. But the opinions it expresses must have been well known to Hoby, who probably solicited the letter and put it in the forefront of his book as a confession of his literary faith. His own *Epistle* is addressed to Lord Henry Hastings, another strong Puritan, who came into his title of Earl of Huntingdon that same year, and made himself conspicuous by his 'lavish support of those hot-headed preachers'. Hastings was probably chosen to receive the dedication of the book because his grandfather had been commissioned to meet and entertain Castiglione at the time of the embassy from Urbino.

[1] Ames, *Typographical Antiquities*, Ed. Herbert (1785–90), pp. 686–705. Seres also printed works by Sir John Cheke and Walter Haddon, and obtained from Ascham some tedious, brief verses in commendation of *Three Treatises* by Thomas Blondeville (1561).

The rest of the story of Hoby's life is told by the State Papers. He was knighted at Greenwich in March 1566 (new style), and sent ambassador to France in succession to Sir Thomas Smith. One of his first tasks was to deal with the disputes that were incessantly arising between the fishermen of Rye and of Dieppe. After some delay at Calais, he reached Paris, whence he regularly communicated to Cecil his observations on current politics. He died on July the 13th, 1566. A statue was raised to his memory in the church at Bisham, Dr. Haddon once more distilled from his pen a learned melody,[1] and the queen herself wrote a letter of condolence to Lady Hoby.[2]

III

The bare record of such facts concerning Hoby as are recoverable is not altogether vain if it serve to give a clearer idea of the circle in which he moved and the events which touched him nearest. He was not an Elizabethan. There is much to justify the popular usage which extends the Elizabethan Age far into the Seventeenth Century and numbers among its glories the names of some who outlived Cromwell. But the barrier that divides Spenser and Sidney and Marlowe from the little group of scholars who laboured for the Revival of Learning in England is less easily passable. There are few writers of note whose active life covers both ages. Thomas Sackville, who gave to the English drama her first tragedy, and to poetry the great Prologue to the *Mirror for Magistrates*, lived on into the next century, an honoured counsellor. But

[1] *In D. Thomam Hobaeum Equitem, Parisiis dum legatione fungeretur, extinctum.* It is twenty lines long, and concludes :

Et placidam mors est vitam tranquilla sequuta
Sic ego, sic vellem vivere sicque mori.

Haddon died in 1572.

[2] Ellis, *Original Letters*, 1. ii, p. 229.

his literary work had all been achieved 'while dawn's left hand was in the sky'; the blaze of the sun struck him silent. The men who were Hoby's teachers and associates have little in common with the swashbucklers and rufflers of the later time. Elyot, Cheke, Smith, Ascham, Wilson, Udall, Haddon, and the rest, were grave livers, Protestants and scholars, whose work it was to bring home to the English people the recovered treasures of classical wisdom. All of them were much concerned with the establishing of a sound system of education, which should instil the virtues of industry, sobriety, and reverence in the youth. Some of them, jealous for their country's good, were translators, and patriotic champions, against a clamour of opposition, for the right of the English speech to a place in the world of letters. When Sir Thomas Elyot published his medical observations in *The Castell of Health*, he took occasion to defend the use of the mother-tongue. 'If physicians', he says, 'be angry that I have written 'physicke in Englishe, let them remember that the 'Grekes wrate in Greke, the Romains in Latin, Avi-'cenna and the other in Arabike, whiche were their 'own proper and maternall tongues. And if thei had 'been as muche attached with envie and covetise as 'some nowe seeme to be, they would have devised 'some particuler language with a strange cypher or 'forme of letters wherin they wold have written their 'scyence, whiche language or letters no manne should 'have knowen that had not professed and practised 'physicke.'[1] The aim of these early foster-fathers of the Renaissance was not to delight but to divulge, to bring the material advantages and moral profit of learning within reach of the humble people. When Wilson translated Demosthenes into English he chose the same line of defence, and developed it in a

[1] Quoted from the Life of Elyot prefixed to *The Governour*, Ed. H. H. S. Croft, 2 vols., 1883, vol. i, p. cxiii.

prefatory epistle to Sir William Cecil. 'Some', he remarks, 'are grieved with translated books. But all 'cannot weare Velvet, or feede with the best, and 'therefore such are contented for necessities sake to 'weare our Countrie cloth, and to take themselves 'to hard fare that can have no better.' The same reasons are pleaded by him in the preface to his book upon Logic, where he apologizes to King Edward for expounding the arts in English: 'I do herein take 'upon me no more, but to be as a poore meane man, 'or a simple persone, whose charge were to bee a lodes-'man, to conveigh some noble Princes into a straunge 'lande, where she was never before, leavyng the enter-'teinyng, the enrichyng, and deckyng of her, to suche 'as were of substaunce and furniture accordyng.'[1] Lodesmen they were, and little suspected what fiery material lay concealed in their innocent-looking craft, or how astonishing the claims of that alien princess might prove to be if once she made good her footing in the land. It was not the Elizabethan Age that the men of that earlier time expected or desired. And when the Elizabethan Age arrived, the noonday forgot the dawn.

Their doctrine concerning the fit choice of diction is in exact consonance with the aims they set before themselves. Sir John Cheke, dictator to his age in matters of literary criticism, lays down the law most absolutely in the letter to Hoby: 'I am of this 'opinion, that our own tung shold be written cleane 'and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing 'of other tunges.'[2] Wilson is of the same mind. Writing of Demosthenes, he says: 'I had rather 'follow his veyne, the whych was to speake simply and 'plainly to the common peoples understanding, than 'to overflouryshe wyth superfluous speach, although 'I might therby be counted equall with the best that

[1] *The Rule of Reason*, by Thomas Wilson (1552).
[2] See *The Courtyer*, p. 12.

'ever wrate Englysh.'[1] To speak to the common people's understanding was to eschew those latinisms which were already beginning to make their way into the English vocabulary. All the men of the school were fanatical upholders of the Saxon, followers of Latimer, whom Wilson elsewhere calls 'the father of all preachers'. The matter of their writings was for the most part homely and simple: good pastors and masters as they were, they cut their sheep-hooks and birch rods from English woods. It is also to be remembered that most of these men were habitual writers of Latin, and their natural tendency as translators was to avoid the use of cognate words. The same tendency, leading to the same excess, may be observed in many modern translations of the classics. When the later generation of playwrights and artists gave over the attempt to write Latin, and employed it only as a well-spring to fertilize native thought and to swell the native vocabulary, the fortune of the English speech was made. But in Sir John Cheke's day the highest virtue of style was the use of plain English, and the avoidance of prevalent affectations. On the one hand were the pedants and Ciceronians, the inkhorn orators of a University. Wilson quotes a begging letter which, as he alleges, he received from an old schoolfellow, couched in these terms: 'Ponder-'ing, expending, and revoluting with myself your 'ingent affability and ingenious capacity for mundane 'affairs, I cannot but celebrate and extol your magni-'fical dexterity above all other. . . . I doubt not but 'you will adjuvate such poor adnichilate orphans as 'whilom were condisciples with you, and of antique 'familiarity in Lincolnshire.'[2] Nor was the affectation out of date when Sidney wrote *The Lady of the*

[1] *The Three Orations of Demosthenes . . . by Thomas Wilson, Doctor of Civil Lawes* (Henry Denham, 1570).

[2] The whole letter may be read in *The Arte of Rhetorique, for the*

May, or when Shakespeare wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*.[1] On the other hand were the fine courtiers who would talk nothing but Chaucer,[2] larding their speech with archaic words. The immense influence of Chaucer on the literature of the Sixteenth Century is visible long before the date of the *Shepheardes Calender*;[3] but he was in bad odour with the graver sort, and was befriended chiefly by the gallants of the Court.

Between these rocks of danger, Cheke, and Hoby in his wake, steered a middle course. They held to the Saxon, but disallowed such words and phrases as no longer lived upon the lips of men. The result was a certain restraint upon the development of English, a certain rudeness and clumsiness in the expression of thoughts noble or subtle. The miserable estate of English verse during the greater part of the century was not a little due to the obstinate rustic conservatism which resolutely sought, in Cheke's too happy phrase, 'to ease its need with old-denizened words'. When

use of all suche as are studious of Eloquence, sette forth in English, by Thomas Wilson (R. Grafton, 1553).

[1] It is even better satirized by Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, ii. 6. In England (thanks partly to the efforts of Cheke and his school) it remained a rare eccentricity.

[2] *Arte of Rhetorique*, fol. 86.

[3] There is evidence enough, to name no more, in Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* (1557). It is not merely that Chaucer's pre-eminence is recognized (as where Surrey, elegizing Wyatt, says that he 'reft Chaucer the glory of his wit'); nor that a piece of Chaucer's ('Flee fro the press') is included; nor that the characters in Chaucer (especially those in *Troilus*) are familiarly mentioned (as where Wyatt, speaking of Pandarus, writes:

> For he the fole of conscience was so nice
> That he no gaine would have for all his payne);

nor that some of the pieces (as, for instance, that beginning, 'Geve place you Ladies and begon', or that other, 'Full faire and white she is and White by name') sound reminiscent of Chaucer. Stronger and more intimate is the evidence of diction: Surrey with his 'soote season' and 'flyes smale', Wyatt with his 'do May some observance', and the other courtiers with their other echoes.

Turbervile translated the *Epistles* of Ovid into English verse, he observed the same canons of translation, with the result that Paris is made to address Helen in this fashion :

> When thou thy daughter kist,
> I would, the kiss to win,
> Hermion's cheekes and cherrie lippes
> Eftsoone to smack beginne.[1]

The one-legged poulter's measure is not responsible for all the horrors of this. Phaer and Twyne, Golding, Sir Thomas North himself, commit the like atrocities. In prose there was a far larger and nobler tradition, for Wiclif's cadences survived, where the prosody of Chaucer was lost ; but prose, too, in all but the ablest hands, suffered the injury of shackles wilfully endued. And yet, seeing that a good Latin word, refused admission, will knock at the door again, but a Saxon word, once ousted, will hardly be brought back, Cheke and his contemporaries, it is fair to say, saved the English tongue from heavy losses.

The group of University wits who re-made English poetry also broke the fetters put upon English prose by Cheke and his school. The last word in the controversy is spoken by George Pettie ; and although the *Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure* is a museum of affectations, his arguments are none the less convincing : ' I mervaile how our English tongue hath ' crackt it credit, that it may not borrow of the Latine ' as wel as other tongues : and if it have broken it is ' but of late, for it is not unknowen to all men, how ' many wordes we have fetcht from thence within ' these few yeeres, which if they should be all counted ' ink-pot tearmes, I know not how we shall speake anie ' thing without blacking our mouthes with inke : for

[1] *The Heroycall Epistles of the learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso. In English verse : set out and translated by George Turbervile, Gent.* (1567).

'what word can be more plain than this word (plain), 'and yet what can come more neere to the Latine? 'What more manifest than (manifest)? and yet in 'a manner Latine: what more commune than (rare), 'or lesse (rare) than (commune), and yet both of them 'comming of the Latine? But you will saie, long 'use hath made these wordes currant: and why may 'not use doe as much for these wordes which we shall 'now devise? Why should we not doe as much for 'the posteritie as we have received of the antiquitie? '. . . But how hardlie soever you deale with youre 'tongue, how barbarous soever you count it, how little 'soever you esteeme it, I durst myselfe undertake (if 'I were furnished with learning otherwise) to write 'in it as copiouslie for varietie, as compendiously 'for brevitie, as choicely for words, as pithilie for 'sentences, as pleasantlie for figures, and everie waie 'as eloquentlie, as anie writer should do in anie vulgar 'tongue whatsoever.'[1]

Beneath the question of diction there lay (as there always lies) a profounder question—of thought and morals. The Protestant revivers of learning did not contemplate any further revolution in these. Virgil and Homer, Cicero and Demosthenes, might be naturalized in England, and boys whipped for not knowing what they meant, without the faintest change in the intellectual and social habits of the English people. The experience of subsequent generations has shown how little the daily teaching of dead languages by orthodox athletic grammarians to the youth of England avails to arouse the imagination or to trouble the intellect with questionings, doubts, or comparisons.

[1] *The Civile Conversation of M. Stephen Guazzo . . . translated by G. Pettie out of French* (1586). From *The Preface to the Readers.* Pettie is here replying to Cheke's absurd contention (a metaphor run mad) that the English tongue, ever borrowing and never paying, shall in the end 'be fain to keep her house as bankrupt'.

The founders of that system of education scarcely intended that it should. The great pagan civilizations march their eternal round, like weary ghosts, through the schoolroom ; at the stroke of the clock they vanish, and the activities of real life are resumed. By the time that the child reaches manhood, he is so inured to these habitual intruders that he regards them as harmless and honourable appanages to an English homestead ; hardly does the thought occur to him that these too, like other restless spirits, have a message to deliver, and are burning to speak. With the literature that he reads by choice, the case is otherwise. The novels, French or Italian, that are first read in early manhood stir the blood and quicken the brain : they are modern, actual, alive, and have a potency that makes the reading of them an experience rather than a literary exercise. The youth, whose education was recently completed, has at last read a book, and the first book that a man reads is more than a book : it is an infection.

So it was in the sixteenth century. The first generation of English scholars who made pilgrimage to Italy went thither to seek help in the study of Greek and Latin. They obtained what they sought, and were glad to turn their backs on their helper. But it was impossible that this insensibility, or this stoical virtue, should continue when residence in Italy came to be regarded as essential to a good education. Italy was not only the head-quarters of the renewed study of the classics : in those vivacious city communities material and intellectual civilization had been so perfected, that London in the comparison might well seem a Gothic settlement, dark and barbarous. The wonder is not that the Italian influence prevailed, but that it was held in check so long. In all the minor arts of civilized life, Italy had much to teach the northerner. When Coryat, in a well-known

passage, records his first sight of forks, he adds: 'This 'form of feeding I understand is generally used in all 'places of Italy. . . . The reason of this their curiosity 'is because the Italian cannot by any means endure 'to have his dish touched with fingers, seeing all men's 'fingers are not alike clean.' And this was in 1608. Forty years earlier, the simplicity of English housekeeping is well illustrated by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst's, letter of explanation to the Lords of the Privy Council when he had been ordered to entertain the Cardinal de Châtillon at Shene. The Queen's officers came to make arrangements. 'Where they 'required plate of me,' says Sackville, 'I told them, 'as troth is, I had no plate at all. Suche glasse vessell 'as I had I offred them, which they thought to base; 'for naperie I cold not satisfie their turne, for they 'desired damaske worke for a long table, and I had 'none other but plain linnen for a square table. . . . 'One onlie tester and bedsted not occupied I had, and 'thos I delivered for the Cardinal him self, and when 'we cold not by any menes in so shorte a time procure 'another bedsted for the bushop, I assighned them 'the bedsted on which my wiefes waiting wemen did 'lie, and laid them on the ground. Mine own basen 'and ewer I lent to the Cardinall, and wanted me 'self. . . . When we saw that naperie and shetes could 'no where be had, I sent word thereof to the officers 'at the Courte, by which menes we received from my 'lord of Leceter 2 pair of fine shetes for the Cardinall, 'and from my lord Chamberlen, one pair of fine for 'the bushop.'[1] Compare Hoby's experience, eighteen years earlier, in Italy, when, travelling as a private gentleman, he was entertained at Salerno by the Marquis of Capistrano. 'Whithorn and I', he says,

[1] Printed in the appendix to the Biographical Memoir of Lord Buckhurst, prefixed to the edition of his *Works* edited by the Hon. and Rev. R. W. Sackville West (1859).

'were had into a chamber hanged with clothe of gold 'and vellett, wherin were two beddes, thon of silver 'worke, and the other of vellett, with pillowes, bol-'sters, and the shetes curiouslie wrowght with neelde 'worke.'[1] In literature, again, while Caxton and his successors were printing romances of chivalry, devotional manuals, and books of practical farriery, from the presses of Italy there had issued works that were to become classics in the new age. Besides Boccaccio and the novelists, Ariosto, Machiavelli, Guicciardini are authors modern to the finger-tips, sceptical, conscious, artistic. Ariosto was first translated by Sir John Harington in 1591; the chief work of Machiavelli, *The Prince*, had to wait till 1640 for an English rendering; Guicciardini was translated by Fenton in 1579. Long before the earliest of these, on the very threshold of the reign of Elizabeth, the novelists found a translator in William Paynter, whose *Palace of Pleasure* (1566) became the advanced standard of the new Italian movement on English soil. Against this book the men of the Revival, their eyes at last opened to the nearness of the danger, directed their store of invective. The hostility to the Italian influence arose from two separate causes, often combined, but nevertheless distinguishable. Both motives inspired Ascham, the doughtiest warrior of the old school. He feared for English morals, and he feared for the solid scheme of classical education which he had done so much to build up. The old-world type of English character, 'the fine old English gentleman' of the song, he would fain have preserved, with a certain new tincture of sober classical learning. That the young Elizabethan Courtier,

> With his new study stuffed full of pamphlets and plays,

should step into the inheritance was altogether intoler-

[1] From *A Booke of the Travaile and Lief of me Thomas Hoby* (MS. Egerton 2148), sub anno 1550.

able to him.[1] William Harrison, the author of the *Description of England* in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, is preoccupied chiefly with the integrity of English morals, and directs his censure against those young gallants who returned from Italy with a veneer of courtly manners, their speech embroidered with foreign oaths, and their moral standards sadly deteriorated. The land of the new learning and the fine arts was also the land of the poison-bowl and the vendetta. Harrison laments the 'atheism, vicious conversation, 'and proud and ambitious behaviour' that were brought back by those who went there to complete their education in its Universities and Courts. One young gentleman of his acquaintance, after a visit to the country of Machiavel and Caesar Borgia, held discourse like this: 'Faith and truth is to be kept where no loss 'or hindrance of a future purpose is sustained by 'holding of the same, and forgiveness only to be 'showed when full revenge is made.'[2] The worst of the evils feared never came to pass: the feuds and crimes of that brilliant, witty, and passionate people left their mark on our imaginative literature rather than on our national customs. The duel scene in *Hamlet*, the plots of the terrible tragedies of Webster, where the northern imagination throws a cloud of metaphysical gloom around the quick animal simplicity of southern hate, the choice of the hired bravo for the central figure of their plays by Tourneur, Middleton, and Webster[3]—these and many other instances attest the influence of contemporary life in Italy on the literature of England, and explain the nervous anti-

[1] See Ascham's *Works*, Ed. Giles, vol. iii, pp. 147–67, at the close of Book I of *The Scholemaster*. The whole passage is worn trite with quotation.

[2] See *Description of England*, chap. i, in 'Camelot Classics' Edition, with Introduction by F. J. Furnivall.

[3] Shakespeare never makes him more than an accessory figure, as in *Macbeth*.

cipations of the older generation. Others, again, in the name of the dignity of literature, protested against the influx of Italian novels. Thomas Drant, who, with Thomas Burke and Captain Boycott, has his memory perpetuated among English verbs, poured forth the indignation of his soul in the preface to his translation of Horace.[1] 'I feare me', he says, 'a number do so 'thincke of this booke, as I was aunswered by a prynter 'not longe agone. "Though," sayth he, "Sir, your '"boke be wyse and ful of learnying, yet peradventure '"it wyl not be so saileable"—signifying indeede that 'flim flames, and gue gawes, be they never so sleight 'and slender, are soner rapte up thenne are those 'which be lettered and Clerkly makings. And no 'doubt the cause that bookes of learnynge seme so 'hard is, because such and so greate a scull of amarouse 'Pamphlets have so preoccupyed the eyes and eares 'of men, that a multytude beleve ther is none other 'style or phrase ells worthe gramercy. No bookes so 'ryfe or so frindly red, as be these bookes,

Hic meret aera liber sociis, et trans mare currit,
Et longum noto scriptori prorogat evum.'

The printer whose remark is quoted was doubtless Thomas Marshe, Drant's own printer, who produced also two editions of Paynter's book, and Fenton's *Certaine Tragicall Discourses* (1567). That Paynter is pointed at becomes apparent when Drant takes up his tale again to inveigh against the story of Romeo and Juliet, which must have enjoyed an extraordinary popularity, both in Paynter's collection and in Arthur Brooke's earlier version of 1562: 'Whether they be 'good or no, easy they are sure, and that by thys 'Argument. For good thyngs are hard, and evyl 'things are easye. But if the settyng out of the

[1] *Horace His Arte of Poetrie, pistles, and Satyrs Englished . . . by Tho. Drant* (1567). *To the Reader.*

'wanton tricks of a payre of lovers, (as for example 'let theym be cawled Sir Chaunticleare and Dame 'Partilote) to tell how their firste combination of love 'began, how their eyes floted, and howe they anchored, 'their beames mingled one with the others bewtye: 'then of their perplexed thowghts, their throwes, their 'fancies, their dryrye driftes, now interrupted, now 'unperfyted, their love dayes, their gaude dayes, their 'sugred words, and their sugred joyes. Afterward howe 'envyous fortune, through this chop or that chaunce 'turned their bliss to baile, severynge too such bewty-'ful faces and dewtyful harts. Last at partying to ad 'to an oration or twane interchangeably had betwixt 'the two wobegone persons, the one thicke powdered 'wyth manly passionat pangs, the other watered wyth 'wominishe teares: Then to shryne them up to god 'Cupid, and make Martirres of them both, and there-'wyth an ende of the matter. This and such lyke is 'easye to be understanded and easye to be indyted. '... I take them to be rype tounged tryfles, venemouse 'Allectyves, and sweete vanityes.'

The Courtyer therefore holds a singular position in the history of English letters. It is the literary first-fruits in England of the Italian Renaissance proper. Printed earlier than any of the much decried collections of novels, it yet was well received by the strictest censors. Ascham's praise of it, if not quite consistent with his contempt for 'the merry books of Italy', is highly discerning. 'To join learning with comely 'exercises,' he says, 'Conte Baldesar Castiglione, in his 'book *Cortegiane*, doth trimly teach; which book 'advisedly read and diligently followed but one year 'at home in England, would do a young gentleman 'more good, I wiss, than three years' travel abroad 'spent in Italy. And I marvel this book is no more 'read in the Court than it is, seeing it is so well 'translated into English by a worthy gentleman, Sir

'Thomas Hobby, who was many ways well furnished 'with learning, and very expert in knowledge of divers 'tongues.'[1] Ascham forgot that Hoby himself had spent more than three years abroad in the gaining of these divers tongues, and that in *The Courtyer* there are to be found, besides moral teaching, not a few tales of passion and of mirth, written in the very vein of the novelists. What he remembered was that the translator was a scholar of the old type, a gentleman of an approved morality and a sober bearing. He was pleased too, no doubt, with the serious and lofty temper of Castiglione's book, and perhaps was willing to connive at the importation of a little contraband along with so precious a cargo of warrantable commodities. So it came about that the history of *The Courtyer* in England, and of its large influence on Elizabethan thought and literature, begins with Ascham's praises.

IV

In the main, those praises are deserved. Hoby's translation, completed by the time he was twenty-four, is conscientious, intelligent, and able. He follows hard on the track of his author, phrase by phrase, and word by word, and it is to the credit of our older English speech that he generally succeeds in finding some rough sort of vernacular equivalent for the delicate turns of the courtly Italian. His knowledge of the language, despite his long residence and hard study, is far from perfect. To take some only of his mistakes: where the Duchess is laughingly named by M. Unico Aretino, *verissima Sirena*, Hoby translates it (p. 38) 'a most perfect meremayden'. But this misses the point, for Aretino goes on to suggest that the company should amuse themselves by declaring in turn what is the meaning of the letter S which the

[1] *The Scholemaster*, Ed. Giles, vol. iii, p. 141.

Duchess wore on her forehead. Again, where a man on horseback is described, *stirato su la sella* (*come noi sogliam dire*) *alla Venitiana*, Hoby translates (p. 60), 'bolt upright setled in saddle (as we use to say after 'the Venetian phrase)'. It is the Venetian manner, not of speech, but of riding, that is described—a manner well illustrated by the equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni. A similar slip in the reading of punctuation gives a false version on p. 90, where 'the unmanerly countrey-woman' should be described not as rising out of her sleep, but as defending herself from sleep.[1] *Alcuna donna* is not truly rendered by 'a woman in the world' (p. 96), nor *una donna* by 'a certein woman'. The Lord Caesar is speaking of female beauty in general, and Hoby's mistake spoils the retort of Count Lewis, who slyly suggests the personal application. Sometimes the meaning is wholly lost in the rendering. 'Because therefore the minde of old 'age is without order subject to many pleasures, it 'can not taste them', writes Hoby (p. 104), as if the pleasures of age were lost in their own excess. The literal meaning is that the mind of old age is a subject disproportioned, or ill adapted, to many of the pleasures of life. Castiglione's Count Lewis, again, does not commit himself to the highly questionable statement that 'finenes hindreth not the easines of understanding' (p. 70). What he says is that ease is no enemy to elegance—the very cardinal doctrine of the true courtly style. 'Whoso hath grace, is gracious' (p. 56) hardly expresses the meaning of *Chi ha gratia, quello è grato*, which would be better rendered, 'Whoso

[1] The Italian reads: *Con questo la inculta contadinella, che inanzi al giorno a filare, e a tessere si leva, dal sonno si defende, e la sua fatica fa piacevole.* Compare the lines quoted by Johnson:

> Verse sweetens toil, however rude the sound:
> All at her work the village maiden sings;
> Nor while she turns the giddy wheel around,
> Revolves the sad vicissitude of things.

hath grace, findeth grace'. 'It is a woorse matter not 'to dooe well then not to understande howe to dooe 'it' (p. 43) fails to give the true sense—that to lack the will is worse than to lack the power. 'Desperate and pikinge' (p. 324) is a wide aim at the meaning of *vili e fraudolenti*. 'Palmastrers' (p. 348) divine by the hand, not by the visage; the Italian word is *Fisionomi*. *Cortigiania*, a word of cardinal importance in the treatise, is rendered variously by 'Courtiers' trade', 'Courtiership', 'Courtlinesse', and (worst of all) by 'Courting'. 'Solemnesse' (p. 315) is not, and was not in Hoby's day, an equivalent for *insolentia*. Last, and most unhappy, 'Stoutnesse of courage' (p. 310), as a translation of *magnanimità*, makes sad havoc of that whole Aristotelian arch of virtues which has highmindedness, or magnanimity, for its keystone.

Most of the obscurities of the English arise, not from the translator's misunderstanding of the Italian, but from his imperfect mastery of his own tongue. Sometimes his syntax is merely slipshod, as, for instance, when he writes (p. 293): 'For sins nature so sildome 'times bringeth furth such kinde of men, as she doeth.' Here the Italian order, putting the phrase 'so seldom times' after 'men', makes all clear. A little later (p. 295), the Lord Octavian is thought to have 'gotten 'himself out of companye to think well upon that he 'had to saye without trouble'. Here again the original avoids all ambiguity by the fit placing of the words 'without trouble'. Often the resolve of the translator to do his business with Saxon words leads him into snares. One of the great difficulties of native English syntax is the right managing of prepositions and prepositional phrases. These are so numerous in idiomatic, colloquial English that the utmost caution is necessary to prevent ambiguity, for a preposition may govern the word that follows, or may be a mere enclitic. Thus, when Hoby writes (p. 53): 'For to

'abide by, whoso loseth his conning at that time, 'sheweth that he hath firste loste his heart': the translation of *Certamente* is vigorous ('to abide by'), but the words are ill placed. Many passages must be teased to yield their meaning, as this, for instance, wherein it is argued that the Courtier may dance in public, if only he be masked: 'And though it were 'so that all menne knew him, it skilleth not, for there 'is no way to that, if a man will shewe himselfe in 'open sightes about such matters, whether it be in 'armes or out of armes.' 'There is no way to that', for *non è miglior via di quella*, is idiomatic, but, standing where it does, it is not clear. The use of these idioms sometimes has a curious effect: 'I beleave 'therefore that it is well done to love and awaie with 'one more then another' (p. 138). This seeming allusion to an elopement puzzled Hoby's contemporaries; it is altered to 'beare with' by the printer (and self-appointed editor) of the 1588 edition.

Sometimes the sense is imperilled by a servile verbal transcription of the original. Since Hoby made bold to translate *più che humani* by 'more then manlye' (p. 108), he was untrue to his own guiding principle when he wrote 'the journey of Cirignola' (p. 182) for *la giornata della Cirignola*; it should have been 'day' or 'battle'. He writes 'for once, he is neyther welfavoured' (p. 282) where the Italian reads *già non è bello*, and habitually renders *quasi* by 'in a maner'. 'For (in a maner) alwayes a manne by sundrye wayes 'may clime to the toppe of all perfection' is a clumsy expression of the idea that there are almost always more ways than one whereby perfection may be reached. The whole section on Jests and Jesting is confused by a blind following of the Italian. Castiglione, who borrowed his classification of jests from Cicero's *De Oratore*, darkens the meaning of his original; in Hoby's translation the eclipse, though of

short duration, becomes total. 'It provoketh much 'laughter (which nevertheles is conteined under 'declaration) whan a man repeteth with a good grace 'certein defaultes of other men.' What is the meaning of the words between brackets? They are an allusion to the classification of jests previously given, and should run somehow thus: 'Which nevertheless is included 'under the heading of narration.'[1]

To break off a long tale—for it is difficult 'to repeat with a good grace the faults of other men', when those men have done well for their country,—Hoby's command of the resources of the native element in our speech remains to be praised. The teaching of Sir John Cheke was not lost on him. He is blameless when he says 'open' rather than 'discover', 'underling' for 'inferior', 'set by' rather than 'esteem', and the like in a hundred cases. The vigour of his diction is often admirable; indeed at times it is extravagant. 'Lothsomnesse' (p. 166) is too strong a word for *fastidio*, and the reader is forcibly reminded of the roaring of a sucking dove when he finds the *mormorar soave* of the Italian rendered 'the sweete 'roaringe of a plentifull and livelye springe' (p. 155). Yet the strong, homely savour of many of Hoby's phrases, though it be not, in his own words, 'a smack of the right bliss', is a good thing in itself. Forget the quiet of the Italian courtly speech, which touches lightly and suavely on all things ugly or excessive, and there is pleasure to be had from the blunt emphasis of our own unchastened tongue. The evil man and

[1] For Cicero's classification, exactly followed by Castiglione, see *De Oratore*, II. 54: 'Etenim cum duo genera sint facetiarum, alterum 'aequabiliter in omni sermone fusum, alterum peracutum et breve, 'illa a veteribus superior cavillatio, haec altera dicacitas nominata est.' And again, II. 59: 'Duo sunt enim genera facetiarum, quorum 'alterum re tractatur, alterum dicto.' The classification, which attempts, in the opinion of some, to distinguish wit from humour, can hardly afford to be robbed of meaning.

the foolish person (there are many in the world, and the Italian speaks of them without heat) shall not escape the Englishman—they are dubbed 'the naughtypacke', and 'the untowardly Asseheade'. The blind become 'blinde buzzards'; the ill parts of youth are called its 'curst prankes'; decrepitude is 'age on the pittes brink'; to keep out of danger's reach is 'to slepe in a whole skinne'; to show grief is 'to fume and take on so'; to bear the head erect and stiff is to carry it 'so like a malthorse'; a peasant is 'a lobbe of the Countrie'; to have worse hap is 'to come into a greater pecke of troubles'; to bear mocking without retort is 'to stand with a flea in the eare'; *troppo amorevoli* is rendered 'too loving wormes'; and *al contrario* spells 'arsiversy'.

The free flourishes and profuse decoration of the true Elizabethans are scarcely to be found in the plain speech of Hoby. Sometimes he doubles the Italian word, as when he writes 'trade and maner', 'rule and ensample', 'purpose and drift', 'the aire or veyne of it', 'wavering and unstedfast'.[1] Here and there, yet

[1] This particular redundant habit of speech is best exemplified by Lord Berners, whose preface to Froissart opens thus: 'What condigne 'graces and thankes ought men to give to the writers of historyes? 'who with their great labors, have done so moch profyte to the 'humayne life. They shew, open, manifest and declare to the reder, 'by example of olde antyquyte: what we shulde enquere, desyre, and 'folowe. And also, what we shulde eschewe, avoyde and utterlye flye. 'For whan we (beynge unexperte of chaunces) se, beholde, and rede the 'aunchent actes, gestes, and dedes. Howe, and with what labours, 'daungers and paryls they were gested and done. They ryght greatly 'admonest, ensygne, and teche us: howe we maye lede forthe our lyves. 'And farther, he that hath the perfyte knowledge of others joye, welthe 'and hyghe prosperyte: hath thexperte doctryne of all parylles.'

The doublets in the Prayer Book are often said to be due to a desire for clearness; but that craving for symmetry which finds expression in all varieties of antithesis and balance probably has more to say to them. Mr. Swinburne's adjectives and substantives hunt in fierce couples through the rich jungle of his prose. The taste for pairs, once acquired, like all tastes of the wealthy, is hard to put off.

very seldom, he allows himself a more liberal expansion. *Freddissimi*, used metaphorically, he renders 'very colde and without any grace or countenance'. Women are not to be mocked at, says Castiglione, because, being unable to defend themselves, they must be reckoned with the wretched. 'In this point', says his translator, 'women are in the number of selie 'soules and persons in miserye, and therefore deserve 'not to be nipped in it.' These modest explanatory licences are but another form of reduplication; there are to be found in Hoby's book only the first timid beginnings of the later voluble manner.

In two or three places the translator, by his choice of words, betrays the bias of the serious school of thought to which he belonged. He translates *novelle* by 'triflyng tales' (p. 37). He boggles at the word *divino*, or *divinamente*, applied by the enthusiasm of Italian criticism to the fairest works and deeds of man. The glorious wits of ancient time, says Castiglione, of a truth were godlike in every excellence: 'in very 'dede', says Hoby, 'they were of most perfection in 'every vertue' (p. 108). The divinity that is in music, by a similar modification, becomes the 'excellency' (p. 119). To Virgil alone, by right perhaps of long prescription, is the praise allowed of 'so devine a witte and judgemente' (p. 66). But these scruples are not proper to Hoby, for the mode of speech that he avoids is altered or ponderously apologized for by the editor in more than one of the Italian editions. And when censure has said its last word, *The Courtyer*, as done into English by Thomas Hoby, is still the book of a great age—the age that made Shakespeare possible. It is rich in fine passages, and even its obscurest recesses are graced by broken and reflected light, thrown back upon it from the torches of those who passed this way and went onward, leading the English speech to a splendid destiny.

Such as it was, it took its assured place among the books of that age, and ran through four Editions during the reign of Elizabeth. There are reissues dated 1577, 1588, and 1603.[1] Ten years after the appearance of Hoby's translation, one Bartholomew Clerke, a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, urged thereto by his friend and patron Lord Buckhurst, completed a Latin version of the original: it was printed by Henry Bynneman in 1577,[2] with a dedication to the Queen and a commendatory epistle to the reader by Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford. After the accession of James the popularity of the book declined. The last of the great Courtiers was executed in 1618, and a new world of parliament-men was growing up. There was a revival of interest early in the eighteenth century,

[1] I find myself, with regret, unable to certify the existence of the Edition of 1565 mentioned by Cooper (*Athenae Cantab.*, I. 242) and the writer of the article on Hoby in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. It would be of peculiar interest as the last edition published in Hoby's lifetime. But there is no trace of it in the *Stationers' Register*, nor in any of the authorities cited by the two writers mentioned above. The later editions are of no value for the text. That of 1588 prints the Italian original and the French version of Chapuis in parallel columns by the side of Hoby's English. The printer, John Wolfe, or some one employed by him, has taken upon himself to amend the English text. Thus, 'the L. Julian' becomes 'the Ladie Julian'—a new character in the colloquy. The most picturesque pieces of Saxon are removed. There are new misprints, as 'verie Pilgrimes' for 'wery pilgromes' (p. 90). Wolfe's masterpiece of emendation is his reading of the anecdote on p. 173. Hoby had boldly anglicized the Italian word for 'heretic', and had written 'to nip him for a marrane'. Master Wolfe, proud of his French, makes of this 'to nip him for a chesnut'!

[2] *Balthasaris Castilionis Comitis De Curiali siue Aulico Libri quatuor, ex Italico sermone in Latinum conuersi. Bartholomæo Clerke Anglo Cantabrigiensi Interprete. Novissimè Æditi. Londini, apud Henricum Bynneman Typographum. Anno Domini*, 1577. The translator, dating from Sackville's house, in 1571, speaks of the interruptions caused by his journey with Sackville into France, and by his parliamentary duties. In the following year he was appointed Dean of the Arches. A fuller account of him may be found in Strype, *Life of Parker*, ii. 183–90.

when two fresh translations appeared almost at the same time. The better of these, by A. P. Castiglione, Gent., who prefixed a botched-up life and added some of the author's poetical pieces, appeared in 1727, and reached a second edition in 1737. It gives Italian and English throughout. The worse was a venture of Curll's; it appeared in 1729 with a dedication (dated 1723) by the translator, Robert Samber, to John, Duke of Montagu. The scion of the house of Castiglione does not mention Hoby; Samber calls him 'Sir Thomas Hobbes', and very sagely remarks, in a preface which is one conglomerated mass of error: 'It 'is certain that Sir Thomas did not understand his 'Authour, or at least his Language is such, that I do not understand him.' Castiglione's translation is dull and flat, Samber's is dull and pert. In no respect does either threaten the prerogative of Hoby, or impair his title to be esteemed the first and last translator of the Book of the Courtier.

V

That the vogue of the book in England should have coincided exactly with the Elizabethan Age is something other than an accident. The literature of that age was a literature of the Court, as surely as the literature of the age of Anne was a literature of the Town. The way to political influence, to social advancement, to power and consideration and fame, lay through the Court, in England as in Italy. Now that the Court has dwindled into a drawing-room, it is perhaps not wholly easy to realize what once it meant to the nation. It was the centre, not of government alone, but of the fine arts: the exemplar of culture and civilization. Few great Englishmen of the nineteenth century have been intimately connected with the Court; few indeed of the great Elizabethans were not. The names of Charles Darwin, Robert

Browning, and Charles George Gordon on the one hand, of Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, and Sir Philip Sidney on the other, sufficiently point the contrast. Even Shakespeare, the High Bailiff's son, was something of a Courtier; he paid the most magnificent of courtly tributes to Queen Elizabeth in certain lines:

> And the imperial votaress passed on
> In maiden meditation, fancy free:

and he (or his editors) inserted in the play of *Macbeth* sundry passages which can only be called skilful pieces of flattery designed to gratify King James. In those flourishing days of adventure, the successful adventurer found himself, sooner or later, brought into contact with the Court. Francis Drake, when he had sailed round the world, entertained Queen Elizabeth on board his ship at Deptford; and William Lithgow, the Scottish pedestrian, after escaping with his life from the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition, was carried on a feather-bed to Theobalds, that he might narrate the wonders of his travels to King James. The Courtier was the embodiment and type of the civilization of the Renaissance, as the Orator was the typical product of the civilization of ancient Rome. And the treatises of Cicero and Quintilian, wherein is set forth the character of the perfect orator, have their exact counterpart in the books written by the Italians of the sixteenth century for the instruction of the Perfect Courtier.[1]

[1] The domination of the idea of the Court is attested also by those numerous ballads, poems, and treatises, in the vein of Guevara's *Menosprecio de corte* or Spenser's *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, which rail on Court life. An eloquent translation of the former, entitled, *A Dispraise of the life of a Courtier, and a commendacion of the life of the labouryng man* (R. Grafton, 1548), was made by Sir Francis Bryant and dedicated to Hoby's patron, William, Marquis of Northampton. 'The court is a perpetuall dreame, a bottomlesse whorlepole, an 'inchaunted phantasy, and a mase: when he is in, he cannot get out 'till he be morfounded. . . . God knowes (for example) how many

The instruction given sometimes descended to the minutest details of dress and deportment. The chief rival to Castiglione's book, in its own century, was written by a bishop, Giovanni della Casa, about 1550, under the title *Il Galateo*. This book, much prized by the Italians for the grace and purity of its diction, speedily ran through the principal European languages; it was translated into English by Robert Peterson, of Lincoln's Inn, and published in 1576.[1] It is the very Sancho Panza to Castiglione's Don Quixote. A few brief extracts may serve to show the nature of the teaching imparted: 'A man must leave to yawne 'muche . . . as that it seemes to proceede of a certaine 'werynes, that shewes that he that yawneth could 'better like to be els where then there in that place: 'as wearied with the companie, their talke and their 'doings.'

'It is a rude fashion, (in my conceipte) that som 'men use, to lye lolling asleepe in that place where 'honest men be met together of purpose to talke. . . . 'Likewise doe they very yll, that now and then pull 'out a letter out of theyr pocket to reade it. . . . But

'gentle and good honest myndes labor in the villages, and how many 'foles and lubbers bragge it in palaices.' The railers were all courtiers, just as most of those who inveigh against modern commercialism and industrialism are (in the scientific sense of the word) parasites of the industrial and commercial community. The last word on the controversy Court *versus* Country is said by Touchstone in *As You Like It*.

[1] *Galateo of Maister John Della Casa, Archebishop of Beneventa. Or rather, A treatise of the maners and behaviours, it behoveth a man to use and eschewe in his familiar conversation.* . . . Lond.: Newbery, 1576. The popularity of the *Galateo* continued, under constantly changing titles, long after the vogue of *The Courtyer* had ceased. The *Galateo Espagnol, or The Spanish Gallant* (1640), so called because Italian influence was on the wane, is another version of the same book. So is *The Refined Courtier* (1663), of which some account will be found in the *Retrospective Review*, vol. xvi, p. 375, where the book is somewhat absurdly treated as if it were an index to the state of manners at the Court of Charles II. So late as 1774 there was published yet another paraphrase, by the Rev. Richard Graves.

'they are much more to be blamed, that pull out 'theyr knyves or their scisers, and doe nothing els but 'pare their nayles.'

'There be other . . . never leave brauling with 'their servants, and rayling at them, and continually 'disturbe the company with their unquietnes: using 'such speeches: "Thou cauledst me well up this '"morning. Looke heere how cleane thou hast made '"these pynsons. Thou beaste, thou diddest waite '"well uppon me to Churche. It were a good deede '"to breake thy head." These be unsemely and very 'fowle fashions, suche as every honest man will hate 'to death.'

There is nothing of all this in THE COURTIER, which indeed is to the *Galateo* what a theory of jurisprudence is to a record of the decisions of a police-court magistrate. Castiglione deals less with accomplishments and decorum than with the temper and character which beget decorum. The attraction of the book for Hoby and the men of his time undoubtedly centred in its singularly high and uncompromising morality, its breadth of treatment and design. The perfect self-dependence and implicit self-assertion of the Courtier, although pagan in its essence, and modelled on pagan examples, made a ready and powerful appeal to Protestant thought. Here was a real bond of union between the Italian humanists and the men of the Reformation. A principle of self-assertion is inherent in Protestantism, which, however it may exalt the higher law, yet practically claims for the individual the right to interpret that law. The self-assertion of the humanists was open and unashamed: man was to train himself like a racehorse, to cultivate himself like a flower, that he might arrive, soul and body, to such perfection as mortality may covet. This perfection had nowhere been more systematically described and defined than in the works of the ancient philo-

sophers; and it is from Aristotle's *Ethics* that Castiglione borrows the framework of his ideal character.

The main outlines of that character are bold and free. The Courtier, so far from being a time-server, is 'a fellow of an incorrigible and losing honesty'. He is not to achieve his ends through by-ways: 'To 'purchase favour at great mens handes, there is no 'better waye then to deserve it' (p. 127). When he finds that he has a rival in love, 'bicause I woulde 'not lyke that oure Courtier shoulde at anye tyme 'use anye deceyte, I woulde have him to withdrawe 'the good will of his maistresse from his felowlover 'with none other arte, but with lovinge, with servinge, 'and with beeinge vertuous, of prowesse, discreet, 'sober' (p. 281). On the question of flattery it is interesting to compare Castiglione with Machiavel. 'Of this kind of cattle', says Machiavel, speaking of flatterers, 'all histories are full', and he suggests to the prince how they may be dealt with. It is one of the chief misfortunes of princes that they seldom hear free speech. But to encourage all inmates of the palace to speak their mind is impossible. The prince therefore must select certain discreet men for his counsellors, and so bear himself towards them that every one of them shall find, the more freely he speaks, the more kindly his advice is received. The first interest of the prince, according to Machiavel, is to hear the truth.[1] The chief end of the Courtier, according to Castiglione (p. 297), is to tell it. He is to endear himself to his prince by his gifts and graces only that he may gain this invaluable liberty. And that his motives may be untainted by suspicion, he is never to ask anything for himself (p. 125).

The whole catalogue of the Aristotelian virtues is added for a dower. The chief of these is Magnanimity: 'But Magnanimity cannot stand alone,

[1] *The Prince*, chap. xxiii. See also *The Courtyer*, p. 298.

'because no one can arrive to greatness of soul who 'hath not other virtues.'[1] Magnanimity is the soul of the Courtier, for it preserves him, in a world of minute observances, from laying stress on trifles, from losing sight of the end in a sedulous study of the means. It is only by virtue of magnanimity that the Courtier can attain to that negligence, or 'recklessness', as Hoby not very happily translates it, which is of the essence of good manners. Castiglione's treatment of this grace of *sprezzatura*—the word has no exact English equivalent—is his chief contribution to a philosophy of manners. His profoundest truth is this same paradox. To do the right thing is nothing, unless the doer seem to value it not at all.[2] The precise, the punctilious, those who bend their whole energies to the study of manners, and expend therein 'an infinite capacity for taking pains', may attain to correct behaviour; they are pedants, dancing-masters, esquire beadles in their very success. There is a grace beyond the reach of art in 'that pure and amiable 'simplicity which is so agreeable to the minds of men'. The author indeed tries to save earnest spirits from despair by advising them to dissimulate their effort: 'to seme not to mynde the thing a man doeth excel-'lently well.' It is a spurious consolation, and he has discounted its value beforehand by quoting the pro-

[1] Mistranslated by Hoby, p. 310. The passage is a simple transcription from Aristotle's *Ethics*, iv. 7, on μεγαλοψυχία. Welldon's translation runs: 'It seems then that high-mindedness is as it were 'the crown of the virtues, (κόσμος τις τῶν ἀρετῶν), as it enhances 'them and cannot exist apart from them.'

[2] Lord Chesterfield gives advice to the same effect: 'When you 'are once well dressed for the day, think no more of it afterwards; 'and, without any stiffness for fear of discomposing that dress, let all 'your motions be as easy and natural as if you had no clothes on at 'all'—(30 December 1748). And again: 'Were you to converse with 'a King, you ought to be as easy and unembarrassed as with your 'own valet-de-chambre; but yet every look, word, and action should 'imply the utmost respect'—(13 June 1751).

verb: 'Grace is not to be learned.' All teaching of the arts seems to lead ultimately to the theological doctrine of grace. 'Freedom under the law' is the beginning and end of good manners, and the comparative stress that Castiglione lays on freedom is the distinction of his work. In the half-civilized societies of modern cities the two extremes may be observed unreconciled, a world of meaningless timidities and restraints on the one part, of noxious and sickening licence on the other. To mollify the savage is the business of education. But education cannot rescue a man from his own small mind, nor crown him with the crown of the virtues, Magnanimity.

All the elaborate discussion of virtues, graces, and policy, all the admirable precepts of tact, and maxims of an enlightened and unselfish worldly wisdom, draw to a point on the fourth evening, when the company sets itself to determine the chief end of a Courtier. The conversation is carried on far into the night, and rises at its close to a strain of lyrical rapture in the impassioned discourse of Bembo concerning Love and Beauty. The transition to this theme, which might seem to lie outside the scope of the book, is managed with the perfection of dramatic and literary skill. Some of the company feel a growing impatience with the 'perfect monster whom the world ne'er saw'. 'I feare me,' says one of them, speaking of the Prince, whose virtues are to match the virtues of the Courtier, 'I feare me he is like the Commune weale of Plato, 'and we shall never see suche a one, onlesse it be 'perhaps in heaven.' The objection, answered for the nonce, rises again, and takes more specific shape. It had been generally agreed that the Courtier should be a lover. But when, in addition to all the arts and graces, the wisdom of Aristotle and Plato (themselves perfect Courtiers) are added unto him, the dilemma becomes apparent. The experience and knowledge

that are required can only come with years, and the perfect Courtier must therefore of necessity be old. But 'love frameth not with olde men', and to insist that he shall be a lover is to expose him to the contempt of women and the mocking of boys. It is here that Bembo interposes the quiet remark that there is a love without any mixture of bitterness or regret, seemly in men of all ages. Pressed to enlarge his meaning, he breaks at last into the high mystical exposition of Platonic love which closes the long debate with the solemn harmonies of an unearthly music.

VI

The discourse of Bembo, by far the most notable part of Castiglione's book, has to some readers and critics seemed inapposite. It is really in perfect keeping, and even essential to the scheme. The question, 'What is the chief end of a courtier?' had received but a lame answer. He is to influence his Prince, and consequently his Government, for good; but it is impossible not to feel that this is a minor end, an accidental result, and that the Court exists for him rather than he for the Court. 'Indeed,' observes the German historian of the Renaissance, 'such a man 'would be out of place at any Court, because he him-'self possesses all the gifts and bearing of an accom-'plished ruler, and because his calm supremacy in all 'things, both outward and inward, implies a perfectly 'independent nature.'[1] He is true to his Prince, but only because his mainspring of action is that maxim of Polonius:

> To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

The dangers of this ideal are easy to be seen, especially

[1] Burckhardt, *The Renaissance in Italy*, trans. Middlemore (1892), p. 388.

in such an academic model of perfection as Castiglione had set himself to frame. It is not good for a man to sit brooding on his own character, or to play the fancier to his own virtues. Nothing great was ever accomplished by one whose ruling passion was self-improvement, who busied himself chiefly about the cultivation of his own mind or the condition of his own soul. The harassed, self-conscious, preoccupied air of the apostle of culture compares ill with the forthright look of a sailor, whose mind is fixed on outward things. It was perhaps a sense of this danger that led Castiglione, as his book was approaching completion, to give over the attempt to illuminate his model from the inside: he sought a cause, an opportunity of whole-hearted devotion, a religion, in which even the perfect Courtier might lose himself, and be abased. Where, in his own country and age, should he find this if not in the religion of Love and Beauty? And so, when the time seems come to knit up all and make an end, we stumble suddenly on a greater matter than all the rest—the Platonism of the Renaissance.

That Bembo should be chosen as high-priest of this religion was natural enough. He was thirty-six years old at the time of the colloquy in which he figures, and, if history tell true, was deeply versed in the theorick and practick parts of love. Only a few years earlier, in 1505, he had produced his book of dialogues, on the miseries and joys of lovers, entitled *Gli Asolani*, and had dedicated it to Lucretia Borgia. In this book, which probably furnished Castiglione with the immediate suggestion for the close of The Courtier, there are three principal speakers. The first, Perottino, inveighs against Love in the finest vein of poetical declamation: 'O bitter sweetness: O poisoned drug 'of healing for the insanity of lovers: O grievous joy, 'that entertainest thy possessors with no sweeter fruit 'than remorse: O beauty, that art no sooner seen,

'than, like a thin smoke, thou vadest away, leaving to 'the eyes that beheld thee nothing but their tears: 'O wings, that for all ye raise us on high, yet when 'your frail fabric is melted in the sun, ye bring us to 'suffer the naked fate of Icarus, falling headlong in 'the sea!' The second, Gismondo, praises Love as the giver of all good things to humanity. The third, Lavinello, distinguishes the several kinds of love, and repeats the discourse of an aged hermit who initiated him in the mysteries of the true and eternal Love,[1] whereof all earthly love is but a weak reflection. But although THE COURTIER takes many hints from Bembo,[2] the discourse attributed to him in Castiglione's book soars a higher pitch and is more sustained than the oration of Lavinello in his own. He had no cause to complain of the part assigned to him, during his lifetime, by his friend.

But although his friendship with Bembo left its mark on his work, Castiglione was under no exclusive obligation to Bembo for his knowledge of the Platonic philosophy, as it was interpreted by the men of the Renaissance. That philosophy had become a part of

[1] This is, of course, imitated from the *Symposium*, where Socrates disclaims all knowledge of love save what Diotima has taught him. Ficino concludes the prefatory epistle to his treatise on the *Symposium* thus: 'May the Holy Spirit of Divine Love, which inspired Diotima, 'enlighten our minds and inflame our hearts in such wise, that we 'may love Him in all his fair works; and thereafter love his works 'in Him; and with an infinite joy taste and see the infinity of His 'Beauty.'

[2] The loftiest passage of Bembo's speech in THE COURTIER seems based on a part of Perottino's oration: 'Questi è quel Titio; che 'pasce del suo fegato l'avoltoio; anzi che il suo cuore a mille morsi 'sempre rinuova. Questi è quello Isione; che nella ruota delle sue 'molte angoscie girando, hora nella cima, hora nel fondo portato, pure 'dal tormento non si scioglie giamai'—(*Degli Asolani*, ed. 1530). Here Castiglione takes up the tale, and echoes it, as it were, in praise of the heavenly love: 'This is the great fire, in the which (the Poetes 'wryte) that Hercules was burned on the topp of the mountaigne 'Oeta,' &c. (see p. 361).

the common inheritance of knowledge ; from Florence the cult of Plato had spread over all Italy. The Greek who gave to philosophy the form and beauty of poetry, and to poetry the scope and depth of philosophy, was in a fair way to be deified by lovers of art and speculation. And of all Plato's work the Dialogues concerning Love and Beauty were strongest in their appeal to the mind of the Renaissance. The transcendentalism and mysticism of these dialogues, especially the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, made it easy to christianize them, so that Plato became a great Christian philosopher, as Virgil long before had become a great Christian poet. Something, indeed, more than a philosopher, the founder of a religion and a hierarchy. A ritual value was attached to the banquet where Socrates, Alcibiades, Aristophanes, Agathon, and the rest had discussed the nature of love. During Plato's lifetime, according to the chief of the Platonists, Marsilio Ficino, an annual commemoration was held, and after his death it was regularly observed by his pupils and followers until the time of Porphyrius. Then it fell into disuse for twelve hundred years, until at last it was reinstituted by Lorenzo the Magnificent and Francesco Bandino. On the 7th of November (the day traditionally assigned as the date of Plato's birth and death) a company of Platonic enthusiasts met together at the Villa di Careggi, near Florence, to discuss and expound the principles set forth in the *Symposium*. The system that was developed by these Platonic enthusiasts is contained in Ficino's treatise on Love,[1] which is by way of being a report of the conversation at Lorenzo's villa. The same system is mapped out with more ostentation of symmetry in the later commentary of Pico della Mirandola upon

[1] *Marsilio Ficino Sopra lo Amore over' Convito di Platone.* Firenze, 1544. The translation is by Ficino himself, from his Latin *De Voluptate*, Venice, 1497.

a *canzone* of Girolamo Benivieni.[1] These two treatises furnish the best elucidation and illustration of the rhapsody attributed to Bembo in THE COURTIER.

The habit of enormous metaphysical disquisition upon the figures and fancies of a poet was older than the new Platonism. The brief poem of Guido Cavalcanti, the contemporary and friend of Dante, beginning *Donna mi prega*, had already been buried under a pile of commentaries. Poets had been taught to esteem themselves by the amount of strained divinity that could be extracted from their love songs. The beautiful figures and apologues of Plato lent themselves very readily to a similar process, and the interest of the works that emanated from the Platonic Academy lies, not in their value as philosophy, but rather in their large influence on the later poetry of Europe. The Platonism of the Renaissance came by the poets, and it went by the poets. The whole of the love poetry of the Elizabethan age in England is shot through and through with fibres of mystical philosophy. It is impossible, for the most part, to identify particular sources and origins. The history of the clothes a man wears may be traced exactly: not so the history of the air he breathes. All we may know is that the treatment of love in, say, Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, is steeped in the tide of the Italian influence. The poetical imaginations of Plato, desiccated and pounded into dust by the academicians, became a sovereign salve for English poetry. The heavenly Love, raised far above the clouds by the dialecticians, on an ascending structure of invisible platforms, came down again, and once more walked the earth, simple, sensuous, and

[1] *Commento sopra una canzona de amore da Hieronimo Benivieni.* Translated into English by Thomas Stanley under the title *A Platonick Discourse upon Love. Written in Italian by John Picus Mirandula, In Explication of a Sonnet, by Hieronimo Benivieni. Printed in the year* 1651. Other works on the subject of Platonic Love are by Mario Equicola, Leone Ebreo, and Francesco Cattani da Diaceto.

passionate, but not unmindful of her strange aerial adventures.[1]

It is Pico who gives the most comprehensive ordered account of the system which Bembo displayed to the Court of Urbino. All Love is a desire of Beauty. Celestial Love is an Intellectual desire of Ideal Beauty. All Ideas have their being in God, who impresses or carves them on the Angelic Mind, which, at first a chaos, so takes form and light, and turns in adoration to its Maker. This is the beginning of Divine Love. From the Angelic Mind the ideas descend into the Rational Soul, whereby is generated Humane Love. And below this again is Sensual Love, an appetite of union with the divine idea as it is impressed, by a further descent, upon corporeal species. Sensual Love mistakes the body for the source of that beauty which in truth the body reflects but remotely and faintly. But as all light comes from the sun, so all beauty is an emanation of the Divine Bounty, and is wholly good: 'Plotinus himself averres that there was 'never any beautiful Person wicked, that this Grace-'fulnesse in the Body is a certain signe of Perfection 'in the Soul.'[2] The assertion of Plotinus is repeated

[1] Let one example suffice—Shakespeare's fifty-third Sonnet:

> What is your substance, whereof are you made,
> That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

The language of this Sonnet could have been addressed by the Italian Platonists only to the Deity. But those who believe that Shakespeare so addressed it have yet to read Shakespeare—from the beginning.

[2] Quoted from Stanley's translation. Compare Mr. Birkbeck Hill's anecdote: 'In my undergraduate days at Oxford, when not unfre-'quently I was in Rossetti's company, I one day heard him maintain 'that a beautiful young woman, who was on her trial on a charge of 'murdering her lover, ought not to be hanged, even if found guilty, 'as she was "such a stunner". When I ventured to assert that 'I would have her hanged, beautiful or ugly, there was a general 'outcry of the artistic set. One of them, now famous as a painter, 'cried out, "Oh, Hill, you would never hang a stunner!"'—*Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham*, ed. by Birkbeck Hill. 1897.

by Bembo in The Courtier: 'My Lordes (quoth he) 'I would not that with speakynge ill of beawtie, which 'is a holy thinge, any of us as prophane and wicked 'shoulde purchase him the wrath of God.' The objections that Bembo has to meet, Pico evades by a subtle distinction between two kinds of corporeal beauty: the one consisting in the material disposition of the parts, proportion, form, colour, and the like; the other, called gracefulness, is the true life of beauty, and alone kindles love.

Beauty, then, in all its manifestations is a certain act, or ray, of the Divine Bounty, penetrating all things. From this main conception Ficino draws many inferences, which he builds into a complete system of love-casuistry. Some of his arguments set a full chime of Elizabethan echoes ringing in the memory. Here is one passage: 'Of a truth the lover desireth not 'this body nor that, but he desireth rather the bright-'ness of the majesty of God, which, shining in this 'body or that, filleth his soul with wonder. Where-'fore those who love know not what it is that they so 'desire and seek after, for they cannot know God. . . . 'And hence also it ariseth that all lovers are fearful 'and reverent in the sight of the person beloved; and 'this befalleth even to strong and wise men in the 'presence of one beloved who is lesser than they. 'Verily, that is nothing human which so terrifieth and 'possesseth and breaketh them. For there is no human 'thing greater than the strength and wisdom that is 'in strong and wise men. But the brightness of the 'Godhead, which shineth in a beautiful body, com-'pelleth these lovers to admire and fear and worship 'the said person like as it were a statue of God. For 'the same cause the lover despiseth riches and honour 'for the sake of the person beloved, rightly preferring 'divine things before things human. Oftentimes, 'again, it falleth out that the lover desireth to be

'changed into his beloved; and with reason, for he 'seeketh, by this means, of man to be made God. 'And who is he that would not wish to be God rather 'than man? Moreover it is seen that those who are 'taken in the snare of love sometimes sigh and other 'times rejoice. They sigh because they are leaving 'themselves to perish, and they rejoice because they 'are changed into a better. So also lovers feel hot 'and cold by turns, after the manner of those who 'have a tertian ague. They cannot but feel cold, for 'they have lost their proper warmth, and, again, they 'feel hot, being kindled by the supernal ray. From 'coldness proceedeth timidity, and from heat boldness, 'wherefore lovers are sometimes timid, and other times 'bold. Men also of a slow and heavy wit are quick 'and discerning in love; for what eye is there which 'cannot see by aid of the celestial light?'[1]

And here is the argument developed concerning love simple, and love interchangeable: 'Verily, when 'I love thee who lovest me, I find myself again in 'thy loving thought of me; and myself, whom myself 'despised, I regain in thy safe keeping. The same 'dost thou by me. This also is wonderful to me, that 'after I have lost myself, if by thee I regain myself, 'it is by thy means that I possess myself; but if by 'thee I possess myself, I must needs possess thee rather 'than myself, and hold thee dearer than myself, and 'so am I closer to thee than to myself, seeing that 'I cannot approach myself save through thee. Herein 'the virtue of Cupid differeth from the strength of 'Mars, inasmuch as mastery and love are of differing 'natures. For he that wieldeth mastery holdeth power 'over others by means of himself, but the lover by 'means of others regaineth power over himself. And 'where two love one another, each of them departeth 'from himself to draw near unto the other, and dieth

[1] Ficino, *Sopra lo Amore*, Orazione ii, cap. 6.

'in himself to revive in the other. In love inter-
'changeable there is but one death, and two resurrec-
'tions; for whosoever loveth, dieth to himself once
'for all when he loseth hold of himself, and straight-
'way is raised again in the beloved who entertaineth
'him in his glowing thoughts; and again he is raised
'when he finally recogniseth himself in the beloved,
'and doubteth not but that he is loved. O twice
'happy death that art followed by two lives! O
'marvellous contract whereby a man giveth himself in
'exchange for another, and gaineth another, and loseth
'not himself! O inestimable advantage when two
'become one in such wise that each of them, instead
'of one, becometh two, and he who had but one life,
'undergoing death, gaineth a twofold life, seeing that
'dying but once he is twice raised, so that without
'doubt he gaineth two lives for one, and for himself,
'two selves!'[1]

These two extracts, which may be matched fifty times over from the discourses of the Renaissance upon love, are enough to show how difficult a task it is to trace the passage of ideas from book to book. And yet it is hardly rash to attribute to the printed Book of the Courtier a direct and real influence on English letters. When divine Spenser platonizing sings, the matter of his song, in all likelihood, is drawn from the oration of Bembo. His Hymns, *Of Heavenly Love* and *Of Heavenly Beautie*, are, in many of their stanzas, merely metrical versions of parts of that oration.[2] The assertion of Plotinus is once more repeated:

> The meanes, therefore, which unto us is lent
> Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
> Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
> And in the same, as in a brasen booke,

[1] *Sopra lo Amore*, Orazione ii, cap. 8.

[2] First pointed out by Mr. George Wyndham, in his edition of the *Poems* of Shakespeare.

To reade enregistred in every nooke
His goodnesse, which his beautie doth declare;
For all thats good is beautifull and faire.

And Bembo's rapturous invocation is echoed in the proem:

Vouchsafe then, O thou most Almightie Spright!
From whom all guifts of wit and knowledge flow,
To shed into my breast some sparkling light
Of thine eternall Truth, that I may show
Some litle beames to mortall eyes below
Of that immortall beautie, there with thee,
Which in my weake distraughted mynd I see;

That with the glorie of so goodly sight
The hearts of men, which fondly here admyre
Faire seeming shewes, and feed on vaine delight,
Transported with celestiall desyre
Of those faire formes, may lift themselves up hyer,
And learne to love, with zealous humble dewty,
Th' eternall fountaine of that heavenly beauty.[1]

The Platonic doctrine of beauty is set forth yet again in English poetry by Shelley, who imbibed it from its source.[2] Shelley is the true inheritor of Spenser, for the Platonists of the seventeenth century, although they practised verse Spenserian in form, smothered all beauty, both earthly and heavenly, under the weight of their metaphysical lumber.

[1] A maimed version of this stanza is inscribed around the interior of the dome at Burlington House:

The hearts of men that fondly here admire
Fair seeming shows may lift themselves up higher,
And learn to love with zealous humble duty,
Th' eternal fountain of that heavenly beauty.

That the hearts of men could be raised by the 'fond' admiration of 'fair seeming' shows was not Spenser's idea. But perhaps the abbreviator knew English, and meant what his words mean: that devotion to the source of all true beauty is a better thing than the foolish admiration of what seems, but is not, fair.

[2] See the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.

VII

There is evidence enough, apart from these high matters, of the vogue and repute of the BOOK OF THE COURTIER in England. Florio mentions 'Castilion's Courtier and Guazzo his dialogues' as the two books most commonly read by those who desired to learn a little Italian.[1] Marston, in his *Satires* (1598), describes the character of the exactly ceremonious courtier under the title of 'the absolute Castilio'.[2] In his *Skialetheia* (1598), Guilpin uses the Christian name of Castiglione in a like sense:

> Come to the court, and Balthazer affords
> Fountains of holy and rose-water words.[3]

Ben Jonson, offering advice upon style, remarks that life and quickness are added to writing by resort to pretty sayings, similitudes, conceits, and the like, 'such as are in THE COURTIER, and the second book 'of Cicero *De Oratore*'.[4] And before ever Jonson gave the advice, it had been freely taken. THE COURTIER proved an excellent book to steal from, and some of its stories reappear during the Elizabethan age in several versions. Castiglione had borrowed many of his jests from Cicero, and had adapted them, not always happily, to the manners of his own age. Cicero's story of Marcus Lepidus, lying stretched at ease on the grass while his companions exercised themselves in

[1] *Florios Second Frutes*, 1591. Dedication to Nicholas Sanders.

[2] Satire i, ll. 27–50. Ed. Bullen, vol. iii, p. 264.

[3] THE COURTIER is also quoted from, or mentioned in terms of familiarity by, G. Fenton in his *Monophylo* (1572), and by John Grange in his romance of *The Golden Aphroditis* (1577).

[4] *Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter* (1641). It is a curious testimony to the oblivion fallen upon Castiglione's book that Professor Felix Schelling, in his excellent annotated edition of the *Discoveries* (Boston, U.S.A., 1892), explains the above allusion by reference to a trivial Elizabethan pamphlet entitled *The English Courtier and the Country Gentleman*, &c.

martial feats, and sighing forth the aspiration, 'I wish that this were work!' is weakened in the adaptation (p. 188). But the best stories told in THE COURTIER are not taken from Cicero: some of them probably first reached England in Hoby's translation. The story of the penurious farmer (p. 179) is told by Henry Peacham (in *Truth of our Times Revealed*, 1638), by John Taylor, the Water Poet (in *Part of this Summer's Travels*); it is alluded to by Nashe, and by Hall (*Satires*, iv. 6), and is made use of by Ben Jonson in *Every Man out of his Humour*, III. ii. The porter in *Macbeth* was thinking of the same story when he said, 'Here 's a farmer, that hanged himself on th' expecta-' tion of plenty: come in time'. And yet it is not clear that Shakespeare knew THE COURTIER. The advice of Polonius to his son is in some points very close to the teaching of Castiglione, particularly in the matter of dress. Some of Shakespeare's noblest praise of music sounds not unlike a multiplied echo of Count Lewis's eulogy (pp. 89–91). On the other side it may be remarked that, while THE COURTIER is singularly rich in stories of Gothamites, simpletons, ninnies, and noodles, Shakespeare's work shows no trace of any of these stories. Shakespeare loved a fool, and it may be plausibly maintained that had he known the foolish Abbot (p. 163) who recommended the digging of a pit for the bestowal of superfluous rubbish, he would never have been content to let him pass into the night unsung. Either way the argument is frail: it may be that *The Courtyer* was a book too widely read to furnish comic surprises. But if Shakespeare evade us, 'others abide our question'. Reminiscences of THE COURTIER are to be found in more than one of the sixteenth-century masters. Where the Lord Octavian describes how the Courtier is to win the mind of his Prince by offering him honest pleasure, 'beeguilinge 'him with a holsome craft, as the warie phisitiens do,

'who manye times whan they minister to yonge and 'tender children in ther sickenesse a medicin of a bitter 'taste, annoint the cupp about the brimm with some 'sweete licour' (p. 302), there rises to the memory the apology of Tasso, and the lines wherein he too pleads that the mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure :

> For truth convey'd in verse of gentle kind
> To read perhaps will move the dullest hearts ;
> So we, if children young diseas'd we find,
> Anoint with sweets the vessel's foremost parts,
> To make them taste the potions sharp we give ;
> They drink deceiv'd ; and so deceiv'd they live.[1]

Where Count Lewis, again, argues for nobleness of birth in the Courtier, not because high virtues may not consist with low degree, but for the much better reason that prejudice plays a large part in all human affairs, and that nobility of descent carries with it a favourable expectation, he illustrates his meaning from the attitude of spectators at a trial of skill : 'Forsomuch as our mindes are very apte to love and 'to hate : as in the sightes of combates and games 'and in all other kinde of contencion one with an 'other, it is seene that the lookers on many times 'beare affeccion without any manifest cause why, unto 'one of the two parties, with a gredy desire to have 'him get the victorie, and the other to have the over-'throw' (p. 48). It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that Marlowe may have had this passage lurking in his remembrance when he wrote those excellent lines, honoured, as few lines of verse are honoured, by Shakespeare's indubitable quotation of one of them :

> It lies not in our power to love or hate,
> For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.
> When two are stript, long ere the course begin
> We wish that one should lose, the other win ;

[1] Fairfax's *Tasso*, i. 3

And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows, let it suffice
What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight? [1]

Last of all, the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* was well acquainted with Castilio's treatise, and found therein a large number of passages out of which he sucked melancholy, reducing them to his contemplative purpose.[2]

In one notable regard *The Courtyer* may well have served as a model for the nascent Elizabethan drama. The dramatic form of colloquy in which the book is cast was the most popular of literary forms at the time of the Renaissance. It was borrowed, of course, from the ancients, from Plato, and Cicero, and Lucian. 'We will not in these bookes', says the author, 'folow 'any certaine order or rule of appointed preceptes, the 'whiche for the moste part is wont to be observed in 'the teaching of anye thinge whatsoever it be: but 'after the maner of men of olde time, renuinge a 'gratefull memorye, we will repeat certaine reasoninges 'that were debated in times past betwene men verye 'excellent for that purpose' (p. 28). To escape from the appointed order, the categories, partitions, and theses of scholasticism, into a freer air; to redeem the truths of morals and philosophy from their servitude to system, and to set them in motion as they are seen in the live world, soft and elastic, bandied hither and thither, the playthings of circumstance and temperament, was in itself a kind of humanism, a reaching after the more perfect expressiveness of the drama.

[1] *Hero and Leander*, First Sestiad, ll. 167–76.

[2] It would make a good study of the temper of Burton, which is both his genius and his style, to compare the borrowed passages as they stand in the *Anatomy* with the same in their original context. The change of setting alters them completely.

The truth that by the lonely student, trained in the methods of a school, had been fixed and frozen, was once more liberated, dissolved in the humours of life, made supple and mobile, to serve as a battle-gage in the play of character and opinion. Philosophy herself assumed a social habit, and ministered endless matter for talk. The themes were diverse and many, at a time when the whole solid-seeming fabric of ancient knowledge was reeling into vapour and changing form like a cloud. But wherever a real society of men and women is gathered together, at ease with itself, and enjoying that liberty of speech which is the reward of good breeding and lively intelligence, one inexhaustible subject always tends to assert its old predominance: before long the company is found discussing the nature and surprising chances of love—'pleasantly arguyng', as one Elizabethan author phrases it, 'of Veneriall disputations'. And this, at least, is a subject from which the eccentricities of individual character and conduct will never be eliminated. So that it is small matter for wonder if the beginnings of true social comedy in modern literature be found in these same colloquies. The *Decameron*, the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Heptameron*, the conversations in the palace at Urbino, not to mention a host of less famous examples, are all alike in this. In each of them the framework, as it is called, is the most lifelike part of the book, and has been strongest in its influence on later writers. The stories of classical and mediaeval antiquity, of Tancred and Gismunda, of Griselda, or of Camma and Sinorix, when they are seen in their settings, are like some beautifully wrought faded tapestry surrounded by a bold bas-relief of figures in action, modelled from the life. The characters of Chaucer's *Prologue* take hold of the memory as the characters of his *Tales* do not. Boccaccio is praised by Bembo chiefly for the skill with which he varies the links or proems of his

hundred novels.[1] And no praise is too high for the gracious interludes of The Courtier, the dramatic episodes that diversify the long abstract discussion, or the brief wit combats whereby the characters and bias of the several speakers are given the semblance of reality. These are transcripts from life; and, in point of fact, Castiglione is allowing a literary convention of modesty to vanquish truth when he pretends that he himself was not present at those four evening colloquies in the palace. His best skill is spent on the vivid setting of his dialogues. Now it is the sudden arrival of the Lord General while Cesare Gonzaga is expounding his views on the beauty of women: 'Then 'was there hard a great scraping of feet in the floore 'with a cherme of loud speaking, and upon that every 'man tourninge him selfe about, saw at the Chambre 'doore appeare a light of torches, and by and by after 'entred in the L. Generall, who was then retourned 'from accompaninge the Pope a peece of the way.' Or it is the intrusion of dawn upon the long colloquy of the last night, and 'whan the windowes then were 'opened on the side of the Palaice that hath his 'prospect toward the high top of Mount Catri, they 'saw alredie risen in the East a faire morninge like 'unto the coulour of roses, and all sterres voided, 'savinge onelye the sweete Governesse of the heaven, 'Venus, whiche keapeth the boundes of the nyght and 'the day, from whiche appeered to blowe a sweete 'blast, that filling the aer with a bytinge cold, begane 'to quicken the tunable notes of the prety birdes, 'emong the hushing woodes of the hilles at hande. 'Whereupon they all, taking their leave with reverence

1 'Gran maestro fu a fuggirne la satietà il Boccaccio nelle sue 'Novelle: il quale havendo a far loro cento proemi, in modo tutti 'gli variò; che gratioso diletto danno a chi gli ascolta: senza che in 'tanti finimenti e rientramenti di ragionari tra dieci persone fatti 'schifare il fastidio non fu poco.'—*Prose*, ed. 1530, p. 88.

'of the Dutchesse, departed toward their lodginges 'without torche, the light of the day sufficing' (p. 365).

The civil retorts, delicate interruptions, and fencing-matches of wit that are scattered throughout the book had an even higher value as models for English writing. Where could English courtly comedy learn the trick of its trade better than from this gallant realism? At the time when Hoby's *Courtyer* was published, and during the ensuing years, the favourite characters of our native Comic Muse were Ralph Roister Doister, Diccon the Bedlam, Huff, Ruff, Snuff, and Grim the Collier of Croydon. The speeches that she best loved were loud lies and vain boasts; her chosen actions were the frustrated clouting of old breeches, the rank deceits of tricksters and parasites, the rough and tumble of clown, fool, and vice in villainous disorder. Yet this same English comic stage was soon to echo to the wit of Beatrice and Benedick, of Rosalind and Orlando. The best models of courtly dialogue available for Lyly and Shakespeare were to be sought in Italy: not in the Italian drama, which was given over to the classical tradition, but in just such natural sparkling conversations as were recorded in the dialogue form of Italian prose. And of these the best are to be tasted in The Courtier. It matters little if the English courtly dramatists be found to have taken none of their many jests from Castiglione; without appropriating passages from his book they might yet learn his dramatic verisimilitude, his grace and polish of manner, to use it for their own ends. So that Castiglione, Bembo, Aretino, Guazzo, Pasquier, Speroni, and many others of those who shaped the dialogue for argumentative and dramatic purposes may fairly claim a place in the genealogy of English Comedy.

VIII

To trace the later fortunes of the ideal of character set forth by Castiglione and Hoby would be to write a social history of modern Europe.[1] In England the division into Cavalier and Puritan, cleaving all politics and religion, left its mark also on manners. No single book was acceptable to these two schools. In the seventeenth century the inheritance and influence of The Courtier were parcelled out among rival teachers. The most popular book in Cavalier circles was Henry Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman* (1622), which ran through many editions, and was held in high esteem by the courtiers of the Restoration. Richard Brathwaite in his *English Gentleman* (1630) and *English Gentlewoman* (1631) presented the Puritans with the draft of a character by no means destitute of polite accomplishments yet grounded at all points on religious precepts. The beginnings of later impoverishment and confusion of thought are plainly to be seen in these two books. Peacham makes it a great part of the duty of a gentleman to be able to blazon his own coat-of-arms: Brathwaite writes long pulpit homilies, proving from the Bible that clothes are the mark of man's corruption, that there is no greatness which has not a near relation to goodness, and that the only armoury that can truly deblazon a gentleman is to be found in acts of charity and devotion. The brief section on jests in the *English Gentleman* is borrowed, without any sort of acknowledgement, from The Courtier.

[1] A history of the literature of courtesy, from the *Babees Book* to those columns in latter-day journals devoted to the instruction of anxious inquirers who wish to conform and prosper, would make a good commentary on social changes. I had designed something of the sort, but an Introduction is no place for it. The only attempt, so far as I know, yet made in English is a short treatise by Mr. W. M. Rossetti on *Italian Courtesy-Books* (Early English Text Society, 1869).

The vogue of the book had passed away with the passing of the society which gave birth to it.

The steady decadence of the English Court, in power and splendour, inevitably wrought a gradual emaciation in the ideal of the Courtier. When Lord Chesterfield attempts to make a perfect Courtier of his son, the changed conditions are felt at every line. Compared to the Courts of Duke Guidobaldo and Queen Elizabeth, where all manly virtues and serious ambitions found a breathing-place, the Courts of Louis XV and of George II are paltry schools for scandal, oppressive with the close odours of the back-stairs. The Courtier, by an insensible diminution, has become ' the man of fashion '. Where the men of the Renaissance held that the perfect Courtier should be versed in all generous accomplishments, a warrior, a man of letters, a statesman, and skilled in all arts and pastimes, Lord Chesterfield makes it the duty of the man of fashion to be unable to do most things. ' Eat game,' he says, ' but do not be your own butcher ' and kill it.' And again : ' If you love music, hear ' it ; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play ' to you ; but I insist upon your neither piping nor ' fiddling yourself.' Even scholarship is looked on with suspicion : ' Buy good books, and read them : the ' best books are the commonest, and the last editions ' are always the best if the editors are not blockheads ' (a large proviso !) . . . ' But take care not to under- ' stand editions and title-pages too well.' In brief, scholarship and the arts, the whole of human knowledge and human skill, are to be made subservient to the art of pleasing in an elegant and vacant society.

And then, predicted by Chesterfield himself, came the French Revolution. The wild man of the woods stormed the high places of literature : the moral theorist, by a process of destructive chemical analysis, demonstrated that these once fair and flourishing

notions of honour, gentility, and decorum were nothing but smoke and ash; while the doomed Courtier, advancing one stage farther in his degradation, from a man of fashion became a *beau* or dandy, brave enough still in his pride, but detached altogether from the age in which he figured as a protest and a relic. And yet, even in the world of manners, the Revolutionary ideal, as it is embodied, for instance, by one of its latest exponents, Walt Whitman, in the tanned and blowzy son of the soil, 'hankering, gross, mystical, nude', never won the day, nor put to sleep the memory of the older order. In our own time, if the very existence of the Scholar-Gentleman be threatened, it is not so much by revolutionary morals as by the enormous growth of specialized knowledge, which divides human life into many departments, organized under learned barbarism. But the many-sided ideal has always been strong in England. Even in the eighteenth century, Congreve surprised and disgusted Voltaire by refusing the status of a professional author; and it is a criticism of modern France, passed upon English painters, that they aspire to be *grands seigneurs*. There was something profoundly sane, after all, in the ambitions that built New Place and Abbotsford. At the close of a revolutionary century, now that the fogs of a crude moral theory are dissipating, and the dream of a mechanical Utopia, a mere nightmare produced by a surfeit of science, is passing away, it is time to remember our ancestry. Our proudest title is not that we are the contemporaries of Darwin, but that we are the descendants of Shakespeare; we too are men of the Renaissance, inheritors of that large and noble conception of humanity and art to which a monument is erected in this Book of the Courtier.

THOMAS HOWELL[1]

Thomas Howell, the author of this volume of verse, belonged to that scattered company of amateurs —gentlemen adventurers, soldiers of fortune, and students of the Inns of Court—who maintained the traditions of English poetry in the barren years between the death of Surrey and the rise of Spenser. It was a time of preparation rather than achievement. The mind of the nation was preoccupied with religious controversy and rumours of war. A multitude of translators were labouring to bring English readers acquainted with the masterpieces of ancient and modern literature. The drama was alive with experiment, every year contriving some new thing for the approval of the learned or the delight of the populace. At the Court and the Universities imitations of Seneca and Plautus were presented by young gentlemen of parts. In the open spaces around London, in the town-halls or inn-yards of the provinces, and in the country-houses of the nobility, wandering companies of gentlemen's servants exercised, in interludes and farces, the unchanging comic art of the mimic and the buffoon. Poetry, aiming at a like popularity, appealed to the people in the hobbling narratives of the ballad-singers, the agricultural ditties of Thomas Tusser, and the sacred psalmody of Sternhold and Hopkins. Yet the refined and gallant school of Surrey, whose amorous songs, used in the Court of Henry VIII, had scandalized Thomas Sternhold, was not without loyal disciples. It was in the school of Surrey that the great poets of the Elizabethan age learned the elements of their craft. Sackville and Gascoigne, Churchyard and Turberville, Edwardes and Hunnis, Phaer and Golding, the Lord Vaux and the Earl of Oxford, although none

[1] Introduction to *Howell's Devises*, Oxford (Tudor and Stuart Library), 1906.

of their works ascends the highest heaven of invention, showed the way to greater poets than themselves. If Thomas Howell deserves to be rescued from oblivion, it is because he too belonged to this company of heralds, and his imperfect work is full of presages of the great things that were to come.

The building of regular theatres in London, and their capture by the University wits and poets, opened a new career to men of letters. By supplying the booksellers with novelettes, and the theatre with plays, a poet might hope to support himself when patronage failed him. Greene, and Shakespeare, and not a few of their contemporaries, gained the best part of their living by their pens. Howell belongs to an earlier time, when the writing of verse was a strictly honorary employment, and patronage was its justification and reward. We know nothing of his life save what we can gather from the tributes he pays to those in whose service it was passed. Like Keats, whom he does not much resemble in other respects, he had not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public. His verses were written 'for his own exercise and his friends' pleasure'. He commemorates many of his private friends in the verses which he exchanged with them, but, as few of them were notable or famous persons, their names help us but little. R. Hussie and T. Hooper, Henry Lassels, M. Staplee, and J. Nedham must rest content with such fame as may accrue to them from the mention of their names in one or other of the three small volumes of poetry which Howell produced during his lifetime. Francis Flower, who is mentioned in *The Arbor of Amitie*, Howell's first collection of poems, is perhaps the Francis Flower who was elected Demy of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1560, and Fellow in 1565. A. M., who contributes to the *Devises*, is perhaps Anthony Munday. John Keper, with whom Howell exchanged many poems,

has been identified with a gentleman of Somerset who was entered at Hart Hall, Oxford, in 1564, 'aged seventeen or thereabouts', and subsequently lived in the Close at Wells. A poem included in *The Arbor of Amitie*, under the title 'The Opinion he hath of his Friend absent', is perhaps addressed to Keper, and gives us our only clue to Howell's place of birth:

> Loe what mishap hath maymed me so sore,
> Like one of thine that there I may not dwell:
> Esteeme me not the less of Dunster store,
> Since hart is there where care doth corps expell.

These obscure lines have been interpreted by Dr. Grosart to mean that Howell and his friend were both natives of Dunster, a conjecture which receives some support from the occurrence in *The Arbor of Amitie* of a poem in the West-country dialect. A further vague allusion, occurring in another poem of the same volume, may possibly refer to Oxford. In 'A farewell to his friend T. Hooper', Howell writes—

> If will were now in force,
> To thee my flight should be:
> Where are the Muses nine that sing
> In heavenly harmonie.

Born, it may be, in Somerset, and educated, it seems likely, in Oxford, Thomas Howell comes into clearer light as a retainer of the noble family of Herbert. In 1562 the Lady Anne Herbert, daughter of William Earl of Pembroke, was married to Francis, Lord Talbot, the eldest son of George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, who acted for fifteen arduous years as custodian of Mary Queen of Scots. Not long after the marriage Howell is found in the Lady Anne's retinue. In the dedication of his first book to her he says: 'But now (right honourable Ladie) I have by experience proved of myselfe, being in your daylie presence, the fame of your worthiness and virtues to be certain true, which

eftsoons before I had heard reported by others.' In 1566 Gertrude, Countess of Shrewsbury, died, and was mourned by Howell in an epitaph which is printed in *The Arbor of Amitie* (1568). About the time that Howell was revising his epitaph for the press, the bereaved Earl fell a victim to the charms of Bess of Hardwick, daughter and co-heir of John Hardwick of Hardwick. This celebrated and single-minded woman was now in her third widowhood, having been married successively to Robert Barlow of Derbyshire; Sir William Cavendish of Chatsworth; and Sir William St. Loe, Captain of the Guard to Queen Elizabeth. All the later part of her life was devoted to the aggrandizement of the children whom she had borne to Sir William Cavendish. When one of the wealthiest and most powerful of English earls proffered her marriage she was not slow to recognize that the chance of her life had come. Before yielding to his suit she drove a hard bargain, stipulating for a double marriage of their children. In February 1567/8 Henry, the eldest son of Sir William Cavendish, took to wife the Lady Grace Talbot, and Gilbert, the second son of the Earl of Shrewsbury, married the youngest of Sir William's daughters. Last of all Bess was married also, and entered with zeal into the administration of the Talbot estates.

In the service of this family the gentleman-retainer of the Lady Anne must have passed many years of his life. The Earl of Shrewsbury had three daughters, all of whom their poet celebrated in the poem called 'A New Yeares Gyfte' (*Devises*, pp. 77–9). The eldest, the Lady Katherine Talbot, was married to Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; so that the Herbert family, like the family of Cavendish, was connected with the Talbots by more than one marriage. The second daughter, the Lady Mary Talbot, was married to Sir George Savile, of Thornhill, Yorkshire.

The third, the Lady Grace, as already narrated, was married to the heir of Sir William Cavendish. When the Lady Katherine died, Howell bemoaned her in verse (*Devises*, pp. 36–8), and he seems thereafter to have renewed his service to his original patrons of the house of Pembroke. In his poem called 'Helpe best welcome, when most needeful' (*Devises*, p. 51) he tells how his own kin had failed him:

> And he that hath and should by nature ayde
> Withdrawes his hande, and sayth he may no more.

The *Devises*, his volume of 1581, is dedicated to the Lady Mary, Countess of Pembroke, and contains, in the lines 'Written to a most excellent Booke, full of rare invention', the earliest extant notice of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. The *Arcadia* was not printed till 1590, but Howell had doubtless seen it in manuscript at Wilton. His allusions to its 'filèd phrase' and 'choice conceits', to its lovers and shepherds, to the wisdom of its author,

> Whose prime of youth grave deeds of age displaies,

and to its very title—*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*—make the reference unmistakable. In a short poem (*Devises*, p. 30) he celebrates the motto of the Pembroke family—*Ung je servirey*. Under the protection of that family Howell ended, as he had begun, his career of authorship. When and where he died we do not know.

The titles of his books are as follows:

The Arbor of Amitie, wherein is comprised pleasant Poems and pretie Poesies, set foorth by Thomas Howell Gentleman. London, Henry Benham, 1568.

Newe Sonets, and pretie Pamphlets, Written by Thomas Howell, Gentleman. Newly augmented, corrected and amended. London, Thomas Colwell. Undated, but licensed 1567/8.

H. His Devises, for his owne exercise and his Friends pleasure. London, H. Jackson, 1581.

There is only a single copy known of each of these volumes: the *Newe Sonets and pretie Pamphlets* is in the Capell Collection, Cambridge; the other two are in the Bodleian. All three were reprinted in his Occasional Issue by Dr. Grosart (1879).

The *Devises*, here reprinted, is the latest, and, on the whole, the best, of Howell's books of verse. He included in it a certain number of pieces from his two earlier volumes, with numerous alterations and amendments, bearing witness to the care and pains which he spent upon his work.

Howell's masters and guides in poetry were Surrey and Wyatt, and the group of courtly makers who acknowledged them for leaders. The book of *Songes and Sonettes*, printed by Richard Tottel in the year 1557, was his handbook of English verse. From this book he borrowed many of his themes and the better part of his metrical effects. Here, for instance, in Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*, thought and phrase are interwoven in a melody which is re-echoed through all the lyrical collections of the sixteenth century:

> Come, gentle death, the ebbe of care,
> The ebbe of care, the flood of lyfe,
> The flood of lyfe, the joyfull fare,
> The joyfull fare, the end of strife:
> The end of strife, that thing wishe I:
> Wherefore come death, and let me dye.

Howell practises the same device of iteration in such pieces as 'No greater contrariety, then in the passions of Love' (*Devises*, p. 16), or 'Ever sought, never founde' (*Devises*, p. 48):

> The more I strive, the stronger is my thrall,
> The stronger thrall, the weaker still mine ayde:
> The weaker ayde, the greater griefe doth fall,
> The greater griefe, the more with doubt dismayde.

Certain of his poems, like some of those in Tottel's Miscellany, irresistibly suggest the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. So 'To his Lady of her doubtfull aunswere' (*Devises*, p. 50):

> 'Twixt death and doubtfulnesse,
> 'Twixt paine and pensivenesse,
> 'Twixt Hell and heavynesse,
> Rests all my carefulnesse.

And he abounds in the stock conceits and antitheses which Petrarch taught to a multitude of French and English pupils:

> Still pynde in colde, I parched am with heate,
> As fyre I flye, upon the flame I runne:
> I swelting gleames, my chylly corps I beate,
> Congealde to Ice, where shynes the clearest sunne,
> Loe thus I lyve, and lyving thus I dye,
> Drownde in dispayre, with hope advaunced hye.
> (*Devises*, p. 48).

There is none of the pleasure of surprise in these time-honoured paradoxes; no man could possibly imagine that he had found them for himself. Hot and cold, lost and found, rich and poor, hard and soft, heavy and light, kind and cruel, false and true, living and dead, up and down, to and fro—these are the simple contrasts presented by Petrarch to his followers, and used by them to express the bewilderment of love and the sorrows of unstable Fortune. It was no part of the poet's business to seek for new comparisons; his art was sufficiently approved by the deftness with which he handled the old, and wove them into gracious patterns.

It is one of the great merits of Surrey and Wyatt that they led the way back to those authentic fires whence their own light was borrowed. Chaucer and Petrarch, largely by their means, became the great masters of the English poets of the sixteenth century.

George Gascoigne acknowledges no other. 'I venture my good will,' he says,

> In barren verse to do the best I can,
> Like Chaucer's boy, and Petrarch's journeyman.

The poems of Petrarch were issued in innumerable editions, and studied by many English poets. Sir John Harington, writing news of the Court to his lady, in 1602, asks her for the book that was his daily reading: 'Send me up, by my man Combe, my Petrarch. Adieu, sweet Mall.' Reminiscences of Petrarch are to be found on every other page of Howell's poems, and the famous Sonnet 88—*S'amor non è*—translated by Chaucer in *Troilus and Cressida*, is translated again by Howell in the *Devises* ('Of Love', p. 36). Howell's last published verses, to be found in J. Swan's translation of the tract *De Antichristo* (1589), are three renderings of Petrarch's invectives against the Court of Rome.

As for Chaucer, his was the paramount influence in all the versifying and story-telling of Shakespeare's predecessors. Howell borrows phrase after phrase from him. For instance—

> 'Tis light t'outrunne, but not to outread the wise,

says Howell (*Devises*, p. 88).

> Men may the wyse at-renne, and not at-rede,

says Chaucer (*Troilus*, iv. 1456). Again—

> My taste of love is lost, as you may gesse,
> That know how sick men savour bitternesse,

says Howell (*Devises*, p. 89).

> For thou of love hast lost thy taste, I gesse,
> As sick man hath of swete and bitternesse,

says Chaucer (*Parlement of Foules*, l. 160). The reading of Chaucer's works, set forth in a new and complete edition by William Thynne in the year 1532, caught

the imagination of the poets at the Court of Queen Anne Boleyn, and furnished them with half their lore. It was in this volume that Howell read the story of Cressida, with its moral sequel, written by Robert Henryson and long attributed to Chaucer. Howell's poem 'Ruine the rewarde of Vice' (*Devises*, p. 18) points the moral of the story once again, in the stanza made famous by Chaucer. His conclusion is modelled, not on Henryson's poem, which ends with a grim epitaph, but on the half-passionate, half-humorous rhetoric wherewith Chaucer rounds his tale of love and perjury. It is a testimony to the greatness of Chaucer that he is loved by many who never tasted the delicacy of his irony. Howell echoes his cadences, but makes them the vehicle of flat sermonizing:

> Loe here the end of foule defyled lyfe,
> Loe here the fruite that sinne both sowes and reapes:
> Loe here of Vice the right rewarde and knyfe,
> That cuttes of cleane and tumbleth downe in heapes
> All such as tread Dame Cressid's cursed steppes:
> Take heed therefore how you your pryme do spende,
> For Vice brings plagues, and Vertue happy ende.

With Chaucer and Petrarch, Surrey and Wyatt, to study and imitate, Howell is well furnished as a tolerable minor poet. But he was touched also by later influences, and his verses bear witness to his interest in the literature of his own time. In one of his poems (*Devises*, p. 33), anticipating Shakespeare, he likens the life of man to a stage-play. In another (*Devises*, p. 92) he borrows from Gascoigne (*The Arraignment of a Lover*) an elaborate parable of a Law-court and the trial of a prisoner. His poem 'Discorde makes weake, what concorde left stronge' (*Devises*, p. 91) is probably a reminiscence of one of the dumb-shows interpolated in the fashionable tragedy of *Gorboduc*. He is never very happy with his borrowings, and it would be vain to attempt to claim for him a place among notable English poets. He is an average and typical Eliza-

bethan rhymer, of fair accomplishments, one of a great multitude of pleasant sonneteering young gentlemen who practised poetry as an added social grace. Like a true Elizabethan, he uses a high-wrought and conceited style to express the everyday conclusions of sound sense and homely wisdom. 'I scorn and spue out', says E. K., in his introductory epistle to *The Shepheards Calendar*, 'the rakehelly rout of our ragged rymers (for so themselves use to hunt the letter) which without learning boste, without judgement jangle, without reason rage and fome, as if some instinct of poeticall spirite had newly ravished them above the meannesse of common capacitie.' In his enthusiasm for Spenser, E. K. would no doubt have scorned and spued out Howell (who is much given to alliteration) along with the rest of the rout. But we who live in a later time, when the country is no longer 'pestered with infinite fardles of printed pamphlets tending in some respect to poetry', can afford to pass a milder judgment. For us the value of Howell's faded finery is that it reminds us of that many-coloured world of music and idleness, and gallantry and romance, where the great Elizabethan poets had their nurture. Howell is one of the choristers of the days of Shakespeare's youth, when 'wild music burdened every bough', when lutes and gitterns hung in every barber's shop for the use of the customers, and when every gentleman could bear his part in a glee or madrigal. The ordinaries of London and the aisles of St. Paul's were frequented by young gallants who wore their fortunes on their backs, and stuffed their heads with legends and fantasies. Guiscard and Gismunda, Luna and Endymion, Troilus and Cressida, were the saints of their idolatry. Every noble family maintained its journeyman versifier. If Howell deserves to be remembered as a poet, it is because there were hundreds like him, and because Shakespeare gained the better part of his education not on the benches of an academy,

but at the court, and in the tavern, and on the street.

The poetry that dressed itself in these new Italianate trappings of far-fetched form and phrase was old-fashioned and rustic at heart. The squire's or farmer's son might make himself glorious in courtly apparel, but his wisdom of life was the wisdom of the ancient homestead; and his speech was 'full of wise saws and modern instances'. The Euphuism of Lyly is a compound of all that is extravagant in expression with all that is homely and commonplace in thought. Howell's work, like Lyly's, is a mine of popular proverbs, which he utters not without a certain air of pride, as if they were the gains of his own experience. His message to his age is the message of Polonius:

That lyfe is lyke a Bubble blowne, or smoke that soone doth passe,
That all our pleasures are but paynes, our glorie brittle glasse,
That Fortune's fruites are variable, no holde in Princely mace,
That women's myndes are mutable, that death drawes on apace;
That worldly pompe is vanity, that youth unwares decayes,
That high estate is slipperie, that onely vertue stayes.
(*Devises*, p. 11.)

His adages are scattered over his pages with a lavish hand. He offers to his patrons and friends wholesome advice, fresh from the country, where it is held in high esteem.

Count not the birds that undisclosed be,

he says, translating the common lore of the countryside into the magniloquence of scholarly diction. From him we learn that—

Not all that glistereth bright may bear the name of gold;

that—

Wante makes the olde wyfe trot, the yong to run outright;

that—

Neede hath no lawe, some say; extremes, extremes doe urge;

that—

The Cat would faine eate fishe, yet loth her foot to wet;

and he takes to himself credit for promulgating these humble truths, which might have perished from the neglect of the great:

Feare not (quoth Hope) to shewe thy wylling will,
(Smale seedes sometyme may light on gratefull grounde:)
If none had wrote by Clarks of Tullies skill,
Sweete sawes had suncke, which now aflote are founde;
Then cast of dread, dispayre no whyt at all,
Diseases great are cured with medicins small.

For all the triteness of his matter, Howell has some command over diverse forms of verse. In these pages are to be found the popular Chaucerian stanza, which Shakespeare used in *The Rape of Lucrece*, the six-lined stanza of *Venus and Adonis*, and a large variety of lyrical measures, including (*Devises*, p. 23) a song set to the refrain 'All of green Willow' which was made immortal by Shakespeare. The poem called *A Dreame* (*Devises*, p. 80) is written in a Quatorzain stanza the invention of which has commonly been attributed to Alexander Montgomerie, who used it in his poem of *The Cherrie and the Slae*. The *Devises* were published some sixteen years earlier than Montgomerie's poem, but the clumsiness and imperfection of Howell's handling of the metre show that he was not the inventor of the stanza. Perhaps it came to him from Scotland in the retinue of Queen Mary; perhaps both Montgomerie and Howell are copying, with very different degrees of metrical skill, from some unknown original. In any case, here is the first appearance in print of a metre which gave Montgomerie a great part of his fame, and which was used by Burns in the *Jolly Beggars*. Further, the Sonnet, as Howell practises it, has the arrangement of rhymes and the cadences which are found in the Sonnets of Shake-

speare, and in hardly any of the Sonnets of his contemporaries.

Without any claim, then, to be an artist in verse, Howell shows himself alert in the business of noting and imitating new-found measures. If his thoughts are not equally novel, that is not always a fault in poetry. Most of the great poetry of the world contains no original or surprising turns of thought, but gives perfect expression to ideas that are the common property of mankind. In this matter of expression Howell was earnest enough, continually amending and altering his epithets and phrases. But, after all, he is an apprentice, and no master; his merits are derivative, and he has set no stamp of his own on the plastic language that he handled. He who walks in the sun (to apply to him one of the proverbs that he loved) must needs be sunburnt; and he who has the music of ancient poets ringing in his ears, must needs, in singing, hit upon some of their tunes. There is store enough, in these 'Delightful Discourses', of good poetic material, some of which was put to nobler uses by later and better artificers. In 'Bewtie the bayte of Vanitie' Howell discourses on the text of not a few of Shakespeare's Sonnets, and anticipates Shakespeare's sentiments:

> Yet Time on face so faire shall furrows plow,
> And writhed wrinkles peer on blemisht brow.

So two of the lines run in *The Arbor of Amitie*. Howell was not satisfied with them, and in the *Devises* he substitutes 'polisht forme' for 'face so faire'. And then the same idea fell to be expressed by a great poet:

> Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
> And delves the parallels on beauty's brow.
> (Shakespeare, *Sonnet* lx.)

Amend and polish as he might, Howell could not write like this. To treat him to another of his proverbs, it was his to beat about the bush, while others

caught the birds. In the dramatic soliloquy of the betrayed and deserted girl (*Devises*, p. 64) there is an anticipation of some of the finest things in *The Affliction of Margaret*. The sense of friendlessness, and the fear of natural sights and sounds, to which Wordsworth has given high imaginative expression, is conceived with less energy by Howell, and is expressed, not without a certain grace of fancy, in the terms of a conventional mythology.

At strife to whom I might
  Commit my secret tears,
My heart the mountains' sight
  And hollow Echo fears.

I doubt the Dryades
  Amidst the forest chace,
And thinking on the Seas,
  I dread the Mermaids' grace.

What shall I trust the Skies ?
  Then me the Winds bewray ;
Poor soul, whom Jove denies
  Each captive doth betray.

There is some gift of imagination in this ; and those students of poetry who can take pleasure even in undistinguished verse when it bears an accidental likeness to some of the great poetry of the world, will not be intolerant of Thomas Howell. If he is not loved for himself, he will be entertained in the name of his family, the poets of the age of Elizabeth. A modest apology for him might be entered in the words of one of those extemporary rhymes wherewith Richard Tarlton, the father of low comedians, was wont to delight his audience in the earliest London theatres :

This one, perchance, you might know
  By his dress and his shape,
  (*Squeaking, gibbering, of every degree :*)
Is a poet : or, if he 's not so,
  He 's a poet's ape :
  (*He comes of a rare witty family.*)

SIR JOHN HARINGTON[1]

It is a commonplace of criticism to lament the little that we know of the greatest age of English literature. Regret for the loss of whole books, poems, and plays may find solace in the thought that the best remain to us; if Raleigh's *Cynthia* has perished, we have Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, if the disappearance of Jonson's *Richard Crookback* has denied to us the pleasure of comparing rival exercises on the same theme by the two greatest of English dramatists, at least we know how unlikely a thing it is that Jonson's handling of history in dramatic form should ever have equalled the creations of his robust Comic Muse. A greater loss than these lies behind in the lost talk of that age of fire and wit. Registers kept by the parish or by the Stationers' Company must be searched if we would know anything of the talkers, what they said has gone down the wind long since. The Mermaid is become a name, the Devil Tavern a myth, the conversational alacrity of Shakespeare or of Beaumont claims our pious belief, but leaves the capability for large discourse to fust in us unused. The very men to whom the spirit of the living Shakespeare would have been least intelligible and least tolerable have built themselves a respectable monument out of his bones. So that we are driven by sheer stress of calamity, if we would make acquaintance with his wit, to take Jonson's advice, and 'look not on his picture, but his book'. Disciples and admirers of Charles Lamb or of Doctor Samuel Johnson can still regain their very tricks of speech and join the circle of their

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listeners; Pope and Swift and Gay may yet be surprised in undress; even Dryden and the wits of King Charles's Court, if the personal records of them are all too few, filtered their talk into their writings in the effort to write as they would speak. But that earlier literary society, beside which the brilliancy of these later clubs and groups might well grow pale with envy and their thunder dwindle to the rattle of a dice-box, lives only in reputation, with the faintness of remembered colours and sounds.

There is no doubt but the reasons of our ignorance were the conditions of their greatness. They let fame 'live registered upon their brazen tombs' and talked, not for all time, but for a supper-party. The reporter and the interviewer, the inscrutable gift of the Gods to a later age, then were not; but their originals, the loquacious gull and the foolish busybody, were excluded by statute from the Apollo room where the laureate presided. Choice spirits among women, by a no less admirable law, were admitted. The company there assembled talked for fun, and he who dropped pearls from his lips had none of the uneasy consciousness that he was doing business with posterity. The disrepute, moreover, that attached to the name and calling of player or playwright did good service in repelling the vulgar. The servants of the Court, the enemies of the City, Shakespeare and his fellows lived in an enchanted isolation, and attained that paradise of mingled patronage and disregard which in later times artists have coveted, only to find that they cannot have both, that they must sacrifice their privacy or their livelihood. So there existed a real society, as it never can exist when the house where it sits is besieged, before the company has risen, by a crowd, eager, inquisitive, and odious. And a real society is the only begetter of real talk.

But these considerations are not the full account of

our ignorance concerning the great men that lived when Elizabeth was Queen. Their reticence was not put upon them by public life; their temper more than their circumstances forbade the confidences of garrulity. The world of knowledge was theirs to conquer, the world of thought theirs to express, and they had scant sympathy with what they knew to be trivial. Sir Walter Raleigh, when the day of a tempestuous life was 'drawn on to the very evening', sat down to write the History, not of his own times, but of the World. He alleges prudence as the reason of his choice, for that 'whosoever in writing a Modern History shall follow Truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth'. But it is easy to be seen that England was too small a stage for the exhibition of all those varieties and contrarieties of fate, those 'natural and unnatural, wise, foolish, manly, and childish affections and passions in mortal men'. The lust of greatness, of universality, guided his pen as it guided his life. Therein he was the child of his age. The meanest scribblers of that day had a passion for the wise saw, the maxim of unfailing validity, whether law or proverb. The greater writers, whose eagerness and volubility of speech was prompted by their absorption in what they had to say, aimed at the same wide mark. Shakespeare, let it be said boldly, had something better to do than the recording of his birth and breeding. He wrote no 'Confessions', no 'Autobiography', and a younger world, curious in matters of debt and diet, finds that he has no personality, that he hides himself behind a mask. His secret, never to be understood save by artists, is that the mask is Shakespeare. For knowledge is through expression, and that lump of chaotic feelings and thoughts that is a man's self can be known only from the side that has taken the shape of the mould, to wit, the outside.

Nevertheless, the craving for a more detailed knowledge of the lives and times of these great men, if it be not allowed to confuse larger issues, is in itself a natural desire. We catch the breath in their deeds and writings of a fuller and freer life than ours, a life of which art was an inseparable accident, when grave statesmen and ambitious adventurers, Oxford and Essex, Raleigh and Dorset, were poets of repute, when gentlemen played the bandora and handled the sonnet, and poets accompanied the buccaneers that they applauded, and fought or starved on the Spanish main. The distractions and contradictions of Victorian England seem there to find reconciliation, passion was not yet severed from action, and thought went hand-in-hand with humour—which is thought out of office. We strain after an explanation of this bygone catholicity and magnificence, but when we seem on the point of wresting from the age its secret we run our heads full tilt against the wall of our own ignorance. And we have been hardly dealt with by time and the chances of time. If only we had Thomas Heywood's *Lives of the Poets*, or the *History of His Own Times* that was meditated, but never achieved, by that all-worthy knight, Sir John Harington, it were something. Bereft as we are of such intimate records, we must go a less direct way to work, and gather what scraps we may from the colloquial inadvertences of annalists or translators, the scurrilities of pamphleteers, the records of lawsuits, and the horde of documents that have been preserved, not because they were written by men of letters, but because they were addressed to men of business. It would puzzle many an Elizabethan worthy if he could know what strange chases are run through the didactic thickets of his works in quest of game that took chance refuge there. A lover of letters will give a place in his library to Master Beard's *Theatre of God's Judgments*, not so much honouring Master

Beard as cherishing a passionate reverence for the memory of Christopher Marlowe, who makes a last appearance in that coroner's court. The scholar who reads through the works of the Fathers and Schoolmen in search of allusions to artificial fireworks is a pretty emblem of the courageous labours of a Shakespeare Society. Among writers who have come to be valued for their irrelevances, for their impatience with the severe preoccupations of that age, not the least estimable is Sir John Harington, poet, scholar, and translator, courtier and adventurer, epigrammatist, letter-writer, privileged jester, and irrepressible gossip. If only he had kept a diary, like Pepys—his interest in himself was hardly less ; if only he had devoted a work to the men and women he had known, like Brantôme —his coign of vantage was as commanding, his zest in humours and characters as real. The one disability he lay under for the office of recorder to the Elizabethan age has been of service to his memory. He belonged wholly to the Court circle of poets, and cared little for the professional men of letters. Gabriel Harvey, whom he knew at Cambridge, was degraded, he thought, by entering into controversy with Nash. Sir Philip Sidney, who was the lodestar of his admiration, Master Samuel Daniel, and Master Henry Constable, whom he calls his 'very good friends', and a score of others, including not a few poetasters of noble birth or of collegiate education, were all to be come at in the immediate neighbourhood of the Court. Hence the records of his life are recoverable. 'To be well born and of a good stock,' is the first essential required by Ascham for his scholar, by Castiglione for his courtier. It is certainly a protection against oblivion, for it brings a man under the tutelage of politics and within the meshes of the State papers. And this advantage is helped out, in Sir John Harington's case, by the tender solicitude that he felt for

himself and everything that was his, so that his reminiscences are scattered through his discourses on Church and State, or appended as notes to his translation of Ariosto.

He was born in the year 1561, in all probability at his father's house in Stepney. Kelston, near Bath, with which his name is chiefly connected, did not become a residential estate until some twenty years later. The Haringtons had distinguished themselves on the Yorkist side in the Wars of the Roses, and had suffered attainder and decline after Bosworth Field. The family fortune was to make again, and at the Court of King Henry VIII John Harington, the elder, father to the poet, made it. He married Audrey Malte, the king's natural daughter, and on her early death became possessed of all the estates, among them Kelston, with which the king had recompensed the adoption of the girl by John Malte, citizen and merchant-tailor. He attached himself later to the service of the Lord Admiral Seymour, fell in love with Isabella Markham, one of the Princess Elizabeth's maids of honour, suffered adversity with Elizabeth, and was rewarded by her gratitude in prosperity. His second marriage seems to have taken place shortly after her accession, and when his eldest son John was born, Harington found distinguished godparents for him. The queen herself stood godmother, the two godfathers were the Duke of Norfolk and William, Earl of Pembroke. The family continued to live at the 'Prebende howse neere the Bishop's Pallace of London', and the farthest of Sir John's memories in later times went back to the place. He tells how the Lord Hastings came to the house as a guest and 'walked out into the garden while prayers were saying', whereupon the zealous Protestantism of his mother broke out in the declaration that guests that 'scorned to pray with her she would scorn they should

eat with her'. His mother was of the queen's privy chamber until the year 1578, and his father's later career was one of moderate prosperity. There is a grant of arms to John Harington, of Kelston, in the year 1568, and the later period of his life was spent in accumulating property and erecting on the Somersetshire estate the lordly mansion-house that was occupied by his son. He died at Lambeth in 1582, and was buried in the Church of St. Gregory by St. Paul's. The piety of his son included a stanza made by him in the translation of Ariosto, which is also adorned, by way of elucidation, with commendatory stanzas on Mistress Isabella Harington.

In the meantime John Harington, the younger, and more famous, was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He has many stories to tell of his school and College days, how William Wickham, Vice-Provost of Eton, and afterwards Bishop of Winchester, would teach the scholars himself in the absence of the head master; how William Day, the Provost, brake his leg with a fall from a horse, 'whereupon some waggish scholars, of which I think myself was in the *quorum*, would say it was a just punishment because the horse was given him by a gentleman to place his son in Eton'; how one of his earliest tasks was the translation into Latin of a story out of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, for presentation to his Royal godmother, 'as M. Thomas Arundell and Sir Edward Hoby can tell, who had their parts in the same task, being then scholars in Eton as I was'. At Cambridge he became a fellow-commoner of King's College in 1575, and remained in residence until 1581. His tutor, Doctor Samuel Fleming, was a grave and learned man, a great defender of classical learning against the attacks of the more bigoted Protestants, a censurer, nevertheless, of the 'Italian toys' whereby his pupil was already enticed. One of the most interesting occurrences of his time belongs

to the summer of 1578, when the University attended upon the queen, who was staying at Audley End. Mr. Bridgewater, of King's College, made an 'oration gratulatory', the scholars kneeling behind him in their black gowns and hoods; Mr. Fleming, Harington's tutor, maintained, in formal disputation against Gabriel Harvey, that the stars put no compulsion upon men; Mr. Fletcher, also of King's College, was Moderator of the disputation. But the Lord Treasurer, Burleigh, took upon himself to moderate and to enforce the use of syllogism. It is likely, on the whole, that Harington was present on this occasion, for his godmother had maintained her interest in the progress of his education, and Burleigh, who was connected by marriage with the Harington family, had written to him only six weeks before, urging on him the necessity of study and holding up to him the example of Sir John Cheke, formerly Provost of King's, 'who was one of the sweetest flowers that hath comen in my time out of the garden that you grow in'. Many years later, Harington alludes to the queen's visit in a cursory fashion. He states expressly that he was present at Ely, in 1581, at the funeral of Bishop Cox, one of the fiercer early upholders of the Protestant Reformation. But although his loyalty to his College and University finds frequent expression in his writings, his reminiscences of the place suggest that an inconsiderable part of his time was spent in attending lectures, disputations, and sermons, that he was, as himself phrases it, 'a truantly scholar', and had 'as good a conscience as other of my pew-fellows, to take but a little learning for my money'. Such an one was that 'old school-fellow of mine in Cambridge, that having lost five shillings abroad at cards, would boast he had saved two candles at home by being out of his chamber'.

In *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* some Cambridge

scenes are drawn vividly, in few words. With his interpolation of sacred matter into that profane work, the author compares the treatment he experienced 'at our commencement feasts and such-like, in Cambridge; that when we have been in the midst of some pleasant argument, suddenly the Bibler hath come, and with a loud and audible voice began with *Incipit libri Deuteronomium, caput vicesimum tertium.* And then suddenly we have been all *'st tacete*, and hearkened to the Scripture.' Or again, he tells of the policy of 'our stage-keepers in Cambridge, that for fear lest they should want company to see their comedies, go up and down with vizors and lights, puffing and thrusting, and keeping out all men so precisely, till all the town is drawn by this revel to the place; and at last, tag and rag, freshmen and subsizers, and all be packed in together so thick, as now is scant left room for the prologue to come upon the stage'. The suggestions conveyed by these reminiscences are borne out by the evidence that has come down to us. After taking his Bachelor of Arts degree, by special grace, he appears to have given dissatisfaction to his father, and in a letter addressed in 1580 to Sir Edward Dyer he seeks reconciliation with the elder man. His letter, couched in an extravagant euphuistic vein, is suspiciously vague and rhetorical. If only his doings were taken as they were meant, says the writer, others 'should rather have cause to commend my discretion than reason to rebuke my rashness'. 'As for my Tutor's letter,' he goes on, 'I know not what was in it, and it may be that he, for the good affection, great love, and special care he hath of me, would doubt the worst, fear the hardest, and write the most.' Protestations of reverence and duty to his father are followed by a passage which plainly indicates that what was most feared by his seniors and advisers was a hasty and ill-assorted marriage. He repels the

suspicion and passes into moral aphorisms. 'Youth is slippery, flesh is frail, love is light, wedding is destiny.' What more can be said? Perhaps it was in consequence of this encounter that he took more seriously to the study of law, reading Justinian under Doctor Thomas Bynge, the Regius Professor of Civil Law, and assuring his friend and patron, Sir Francis Walsingham, by letter, that he has entered in earnest on that study. In the following year he took his M.A. degree, and proceeded to the Inns of Court, where he enjoyed the ministrations of Thomas Egerton, at that time Reader at Lincoln's Inn, subsequently Lord High Chancellor and Earl of Ellesmere. There he studied Littleton, as he wittily alleged years after, but 'to the title of discontinuance', and it seems certain that the death of his father changed his prospects and his plans. He was now a landed proprietor, rich in friends, amply endowed with natural wits, and the world was all before him. His neglect of the graver studies of the University implies no lack of ability or even of application; in the sixteenth century those poets were few indeed who took kindly to the discipline of the schools. In the newer learning of that age he might be called erudite, and his favour with the queen, together with the protection and friendship of men like Burleigh, Walsingham, and Sir Walter Mildmay, must have marked him out at Court for a brilliant career.

The history of his life hardly fulfilled these high expectations. In part he was unlucky. With the best goodwill in the world to come out a winner, he had a knack of attaching himself to the losing faction. It was not a deep fetch of policy for a godson of the queen's to accept a knighthood from Essex, even though the honour were thrust upon him. But his disasters began at an earlier date. At Court he gained the dangerous reputation of a wit. His worldly ambi-

tions, sincerely enough entertained, were never allowed to curb the fatal faculty of expression. His valour and his labour were sufficient, but 'that damnable uncovered honesty', with which his cousin reproached him, marred his fortunes. The theory and practice of time-serving, to which Francis Bacon applied the whole energies of a mighty intellect, seemed to him a holiday task; to the end of his life he failed to recognize that candour is a luxury. When the thing is, why not say the word? There is something pathetic about the child-like simplicity which clung to him through life. That the breaking of a jest may break a friendship, that the time, place, and circumstances of its utterance lend their colour to truth, were propositions that he never mastered. A courtier and a politician by birth and opportunity, he thought that these professions might be reconciled with the licences of poetry and the freedoms of wit. He paid the price of that honest delight in free speech which insists on assuming that what is not ill meant shall be well taken. His dwindling patrimony kept him from penury, but he belongs, by right of kinship, to the 'threadbare, goldless genealogy' of those who indulge themselves with that most costly dish—speech for its own sake.

Before he left Eton his wanton Muse had taken her first flights. Early in life he wrote a dialogue on Marriage, now lost, with the purpose, perhaps, of allaying the paternal disquietude on this topic. Some of his epigrams, which range over many years, seem to belong to his earlier time at Court. He makes a definite appearance in July 1586, in company with Edward Rogers, who was, or was soon to be, his brother-in-law, as one of the 'undertakers' for the repeopling and inhabiting of the province of Munster. This, his first absence from England, lasted only a few months, during which time he showed himself inqui-

sitive of popular opinion concerning St. Patrick and picked up some lore in the matter of witchcraft. In later years he alleged truly that his very genius fitted him for that country, and if he gave too little attention to the 'inhabiting, storing, and manuring' of lands and tenements, he loved the simple people, and noted, with a sagacity rare in statesmen, the essentials of the political situation. But the expedition was a failure, and on his return he settled down at Kelston. About this time he married Mary, the daughter of Lady Rogers, of Cannington, widow to a Somersetshire knight. His wife and his mother-in-law accompanied him little on his frequent visits to Court, and the younger lady, encouraged by the elder, complained much of his prolonged absences. He reproves them both in divers epigrams:

> Mall, in mine absence this is still your song,
> Come home, sweetheart, you stay from home too long;
> That thou lov'st home, my love, I like it well,
> Wives should be like thy tortas in the shell.

But for men, who must see and be seen, the case is different. For them—

> To have no home, perhaps it is a curse;
> To be a prisoner at home is worse.

Yet his appearances at Court were not always of the happiest. The occasion of his translation of Ariosto, if a fairly authenticated tradition be true, was in this wise. To amuse, or to tease, the ladies of the Court, he had translated the twenty-eighth book of the *Orlando Furioso*. Now this 'bad book', as himself admitted later, has in it 'neither history nor allegory, nor scant anything that is good', and can be defended, by a determined moralist, only on the ground that its demonstration of the universal frailty of the female sex has become 'the comfort of cuckolds'. Queen

Elizabeth was displeased, and banished him the Court until he should have completed the translation of the entire poem. The task may have been set in the spirit of the step-mother of fairy legend, but Harington's fluency came to his aid, and in 1591 his complete translation appeared in folio, with a dedication to the queen. The most recent edition of this fine work belongs to the year 1634; the *Dictionary of National Biography*, deviating into criticism, states that it has since been superseded, but does not mention by whom. It is true that Harington, in the right spirit of a poetical translator, omits and alters, compresses and expands. But the speech of that eloquent age ran freely from his tongue, and in the numerous incidental similes and 'sentences', or moral aphorisms, he often attains the note of finality. Let a single stanza, descriptive of the region in the moon where Astolfo sought the lost wits of Orlando, illustrate the translator's ease:

> The precious time that fools mis-spend in play,
> The vain attempts that never take effect,
> The vows that sinners make, and never pay,
> The counsels wise that careless men neglect,
> The fond desires that lead us oft astray,
> The praises that with pride the heart infect,
> And all we lose with folly and mis-spending,
> May there be found unto this place ascending.

But an examination of this forgotten work, which anticipates, in places, the cadences of Shakespeare's twin poems, would ask a chapter. Be it rather recorded here that in the year of the completion of his *Ariosto* Harington was made Sheriff of Somersetshire, and that, if it is doubted whether he entertained the queen at Kelston in the following year, it is certain that he was present at Oxford during her visit of 1592, and wrote an epigram 'Of Learning Nothing at a Lecture'. His brother Francis, a Christ Church man, who contributed fifty stanzas to the *Orlando*, was present on

the same solemn occasion. Then followed some years spent chiefly as a private country gentleman, 'that lives among clouted shoes, in his frieze jacket and galoshes'. The cares of his family and estates occupied, but did not satisfy, him. He was well aware that 'men that obscure themselves shall not be sought for with torch-light', he eagerly pondered occasion to be thought of and talked of, and the fruit of his meditations appeared in 1596, and created another scandal at the Court. He had something of the mechanical and inventive turn, and there were reasons enough in that age why his invention should be directed to the improvement of sanitary appliances. *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, a pamphlet the title of which contains one of Harington's puns, and by no means the wretchedest of them, was supplemented by the *Plain Plot of a Privy in Perfection*, with charts, and bills of cost, and everything handsome about it. The real reform Harington had to urge was sound and good, the need for it not small, and his treatment of his theme is, on the whole, both light and airy. What was resented was the combination of far-fetched erudition, telling satire, and volatile wit, with the humble original topic. In his pamphlet Literature was married to Sanitation, and the epoch that had rendered the rare union possible frowned on the couple and forbade the banns. A little storm arose at Court, and only the favour of the queen, which persisted through her anger, saved her 'saucy godson' from the Star Chamber. Harington answered some of his critics in an *Apology*, others in the epigrams wherewith his quiver was always stocked; but the ball of scandal was hard to stop. An anonymous writer, probably of Brasenose College, Oxford, took occasion to write a dissertation, more scurrilous than Harington's, by way of answer to him. This tract, entitled *Ulysses upon Ajax*, and signed 'Misodiaboles', is written in a less measured style

than the *Ajax*, and seems to conceal some personal pique.

It cannot be doubted that another year or two in the country became necessary in consequence of this adventure. The Englisher of Ariosto, the first English disciple of Rabelais, had reaped little profit from either of his achievements. Perhaps he was content; in his *Apology* he allows that, because 'even at wise men's tables fools have most of the talk, therefore I came in with a bauble to have my tale heard, I must needs confess it'. He had his tale heard; and having claimed the privilege of motley, he suffered the fool's neglect. From Kelston, however, in 1599, he was called in haste, so that he had 'scant time to put on his boots', to bear a part in the Essex expedition. His account of his adventures in Ireland, and of the poor reception he met with from the queen on his premature return, is, perhaps, the best known part of his history. 'What, did the fool bring *you*, too? Go back to your business,' was his Royal Mistress's greeting. 'I did not stay to be bidden twice; if all the Irish rebels had been at my heels, I should not have had better speed.' But before her reign was over, the poet, now Sir John Harington, is found once more in the queen's presence, and earning by his sportive fancies her gentler rebuke: 'When thou dost feel creeping time at thy gate, these fooleries will please thee less.'

The prophecy was speedily fulfilled. Already, during the later years of Elizabeth's reign, he had turned his attention more exclusively to affairs, had attempted to regain by lawsuit the lost lands of his ancestors in Yorkshire, and to secure by cajolery the inheritance of his mother-in-law's property for his children. The more intimate of the epigrams give a vivid picture of his domestic circle. Some of them, not included in the posthumously printed collections,

are inscribed by his own hand in the presentation copy of his *Orlando*, given by him to the Lady Rogers. They are added, he says, to remind her of 'the kind and sometimes unkind occasions on which some of them were written'. He 'durst never show them to any lady' (he was learning prudence by degrees) save herself and her 'heir female'—by which name he preferred to designate his wife. The Lady Rogers's personal traits, her fondness for ancient saws :—'Store is no sore', 'At meat be glad, for sin be sad'—the discussions, not always amicable, that she had with her son-in-law concerning the relative heinousness of the Seven Deadly Sins, the proper hour for dinner, and the ultimate disposition of her property; her fondness for pet dogs and her dislike of the smell of garlic, all stand recorded in the epigrams. When she died, in January 1601, the family feud came to a head, and served to employ Sir John in the period of his disgrace. Acting as the representative of his wife, who was one of the executors of the will, Sir John barricaded and fortified himself in the house at Cannington and refused admission to his brother-in-law, who came to secure the interests of the Rogers family. By the authority of the Deputy-Sheriff the house was broken into, and Sir John, who had already conveyed away some of the property of the deceased, was shut up without light or food for the better part of a day. He brought an action in the Star Chamber later without success. The incident marks the end of the gay period of his career. With the accession of the new line he set himself to regain the name and, if possible, the emoluments, of a sober politician. In a copy of Latin verses written at this time he bids farewell to his 'wanton Muse', and casts a regretful eye backward on the errors into which she had led him. He is willing to serve the king in any capacity whatsoever, his engineering and architectural abilities

are at the Royal bidding—then he thinks of his *Ajax* and admits, with a sigh,

> Ah! nimis his operis ingeniosus eram.

His resolve is taken,

> Quod superest aevi, patriae patriaeque parenti
> Dedico, nec levibus iam datur hora iocis.

But James, whom he had plied before with a presentation copy of the *Orlando* and with a New Year's gift of a curiously constructed lantern, whose right to the throne he had maintained by epigram and prose discourse, in whose honour he had grown 'Scottish' in speech and manner, and for whose sake he had entertained Captain William Hunter at Bath—James, beyond the ordinary complimentary acknowledgments, did nothing for him. To his kinsman of Exton was granted a peerage; to Sir John of Kelston, an interview. In the course of a conversation inimitably described by the knight, the fatuous monarch 'enquired much of learning, and showed me his own in such sort as made me remember my examiner at Cambridge aforetime'. The king went on, inevitably, to talk of tobacco and witchcraft, the two themes of his severer studies, and told stories of the second sight. So Sir John found, as his prophetic soul had warned him, that he had 'danced barefoot with Clio and her schoolfellows until he did sweat, and then had gotten nothing to slake his thirst but a pitcher of Helicon's well'. At the Court of Elizabeth he was known as the 'witty poet', to King James he was the 'merry blade'. So perilous a thing is it to attain to the ambitions of a joker.

The last glimpse we have of the efforts of Sir Ajax to obtain honourable preferment reveals him in all the glory of his pleasant simplicity. A highly characteristic document on the state of Ireland was addressed by

him, in the year 1605, to my Lord of Devonshire and my Lord of Cranborne, beseeching their influence with the king. The offices of Archbishop of Dublin and Lord High Chancellor had simultaneously fallen vacant by the death of Archbishop Loftus. The modest request of the knight is that he may obtain the succession to both offices, spiritual and temporal. He is willing to take Holy Orders, he has long had a purpose to devote himself wholly to the study of divinity, and his resolve has been strengthened by the crosses of this life, by restraint of liberty, by sickness, by unkind kinsfolk and unfaithful friends, which troubles have also, by a happy coincidence, given him some insight into the business of the Law Courts. The Holy Scripture itself teaches that if any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. And then, in a delightful piece of reasoning, the applicant establishes his own fulfilment of the conditions laid down by St. Paul, laying especial stress on the fact that he is not 'given to filthy lucre'. This is, indeed, the true metamorphosis of Ajax. Did ever poet, before or since, find such use for the poverty of his tribe? As for the Chancellor's office, a lawyer is no good appointment:—'They suspect all strangers, and especially a lawyer.' He concludes 'that the world is a stage, and we who live in it all stage-players', and is desirous that the comedy of his life may have a grave ending, that he may not '*in extremo actu deficere*'. He therefore makes bold to set his qualifications, without imputation of arrogancy, before the two persons by whom 'it is likely that his Majesty will most specially be advised'. Lord Cranborne has assisted him in time past with the advice not to repeat the things the queen said in an interview. If his request is granted, the petitioner is willing to leave his 'country and sweetest home' to serve the King's Majesty.

There is no record of the reception given to this strange supplication. Perhaps the noblemen to whom it was addressed consulted a copy of the *Ajax* and found the author's earlier declaration: 'I have always had a Bible in my parlour these many years, and oft-times when the weather hath been foul, and that I have had no other book to read on, and have wanted company to play at cards or at tables with me, I have read in those books of the Old Testament, at least half an hour by the clock.' In any case, the bishopric was granted to one Jones, and Sir John was cast back on his 'sweetest home'. There in his later years he lived with his wife and the survivors of his eleven children, took the baths for his health, married two of his daughters, and indulged the graver thoughts that had always underlain his merriment. Not that his visits to the Court were discontinued. His cousin, Lord Harington, was tutor to the Princess Elizabeth, and Sir John was one of the crowd of courtiers that attached themselves to Prince Henry. For the prince he translated the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, and wrote his supplement to Bishop Godwin's *Catalogue of the Bishops*, introducing, as was his wont, a heap of memories. Four centuries and more of his epigrams he also copied out and presented to the same patron. In the printed editions many of these, particularly those dealing with affairs of State or decrying the Puritans, were omitted by John Budge, the stationer who introduced them to the public. In May 1612 Sir John Harington, then 'sick of a dead palsy', visited Lord Salisbury, who was staying at the Bath; in December he died and was buried at Kelston.

The oblivion that has befallen his writings might be symbolized by one of the lines he had inscribed on his bedstead at Kelston:

Longa quiescendi tempora fata dabunt.

Some of them, not to put posterity to the charge of forgetting them, are lost; others exist only in

manuscript. All are filled with his wit, and exhibit the gaiety and lightness, the ease and irrelevance, of good talk. He is at his best, no doubt, when he is speaking of himself—and he is often at his best. He cannot apologize for poetry without straining himself to make mention of his kindred and friends, 'that might well be left out'. He is as pat with his posies as a goldsmith's wife, and the wealth of his true tales shames the shortness of his travels. Now it is a story of Justice Randoll, of London, a man so avaricious that although he had a thousand pounds at home, in a chest full of old boots and shoes, he would put up a widgeon for his supper when he dined with my Lord Mayor; again it is the saying of a good knight of the county—('Gogs soul, Sirs, the best gentleman of us all need not forswear hanging')—that receives the seal of his authentication. He is curious in detail: he never knew but one Englishman, the worthy Sir Walter Mildmay, to eat his meat without sauce. When the austerity of a translator's task denies him the text, he finds harbour for his jests in the margin, and criticizes the laws of the Amazons: 'There were too many Speakers, belike, in their Parliament.' He holds his fancy and his memory on so light a leash that he will let them slip at mice or rabbits. Withal he sometimes encounters nobler game, and his remark addressed to Sir John Spenser, of Northamptonshire, anticipates Gibbon: 'You have a learned writer of your name, make much of him, for it is not the least honour of your honourable family.' His works are a mine of anecdote and allusion, and he was 'somewhat more than ordinarily acquainted with all the Earls and great men' of his time. Had he moved in that other circle, of men whom few called great, had he known but half as many dramatists as he knew bishops, we should not have been left groping in the ash-pit for the sorry relics that go to make a history of Elizabethan literature.

JOHN DRYDEN AND POLITICAL SATIRE[1]

When you asked me to deliver the Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture I felt that I had no choice but to accept. The compulsion was put upon me not by the honour of your invitation, though I assure you I am not insensible of that, but by the name of Henry Sidgwick. A time will come, all too soon, when those who deliver this annual lecture must deliver it in honour of one whom they never saw, and never knew.

I am glad that I knew him; he stands to me for what is best in the temper of Cambridge, and it is my lecture that is honoured by being dedicated to his memory.

Whoever speaks to-day in praise of John Dryden speaks to a world that is far from being predisposed in his favour. The poetry of to-day has many kinds of excellence, but they are all remote from the excellence of Dryden. The Romantic movement was against him, though two of the greatest and most vigorous masters of Romance, Byron and Scott, were his devoted adherents and champions. Now that Romance, after a long reign, has fallen into a decline, the newer kinds of poetry take their cue from Donne and the metaphysicals whom Dryden supplanted. We are fanciful, decorative, conceited, mystical; we find no difficulty with the jewelled raptures of Francis Thompson or the vague ecstasies of Rabindranath Tagore. Women,

[1] The Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture, delivered at Newnham College, Cambridge, in November 1913.

whose voice in criticism counts for more than it did in Dryden's time, have no use for the glorious John. He still has his admirers, but they are dwindled to an old-fashioned quiet sect.

Let us leave our tastes and leanings on one side for the moment, and consider the question historically. There is much virtue in the history of literature. It teaches diffidence, and without interfering at all with our several likes and dislikes, saves us from transforming our perfectly sound tastes into perfectly unsound judgements.

For the last quarter of the seventeenth century Dryden dominated English poetry. An anthology of tributes to his sovereignty might be gathered from the verses of his enemies, who were many and fierce. Hardly one of them does not incidentally praise and exalt him. His friends, on the other hand, were almost all proud to confess themselves his disciples. A very large group of young men, whose work contained the promise of the future, gathered around him, bowed to his dictatorship, accepted his judgements, and fought under his flag. A pinch from his snuff-box in Will's Coffee-house was a diploma in letters. When he died he was carried to his tomb in Westminster Abbey like a king, on a hearse with six white Flanders horses, with eight horsemen in long cloaks riding before the hearse, and on either side of it thirteen footmen in velvet caps. Above one hundred coaches of the nobility and gentry attended the procession, which was preceded by a band of music, and Dryden was laid to rest in Chaucer's grave.

The throne of poetry was ascended, after a short vacancy, and amid many rival claims, by Alexander Pope, who at all times exalted his predecessor and based his own title on his lineal descent. When the Romantic rebels delivered their assault on the throne it was Pope who bore the brunt of the attack, so that

the prime sovereignty of Dryden was unchallenged and undisturbed for the whole of the eighteenth century. Taste may be impatient of these facts, or may find them irrelevant; history is bound to reckon with them and to attempt an explanation. If we can understand how it was that Dryden loomed so large in the world of his contemporaries, we shall place ourselves at an angle whence his greatness can be seen.

His gradual conquest of fame and pre-eminence was most rapid in the last ten years of his life, after the Revolution, when he was deprived of all his pensions and reduced to struggle for a livelihood by undertaking tedious tasks for the booksellers. He maintained the struggle with success and growing credit from his fifty-ninth year onwards at a period of our history when no author had as yet managed to keep himself afloat by the profits drawn from the sale of his publications. That it was a severe struggle is confessed by Dryden in the well-known lines at the close of his elegy on Eleonora, Countess of Abingdon, in 1692:

> Let this suffice: nor thou, great saint, refuse
> This humble tribute of no vulgar muse:
> Who, not by cares, or wants, or age deprest,
> Stems a wild deluge with a dauntless brest:
> And dares to sing thy praises, in a clime
> Where vice triumphs and virtue is a crime:
> Where even to draw the picture of thy mind,
> Is satire on the most of humane kind:
> Take it, while yet 'tis praise; before my rage
> Unsafely just, break loose on this bad age;
> So bad, that thou thy self had'st no defence
> From vice, but barely by departing hence.

And the dignity that he maintained through all his hardships finds noble expression, five years later, in those sonorous sentences which he affixed to his translation of Virgil:

'What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and

at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write; and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me, by the lying character which has been given them of my morals. Yet steady to my principles, and not dispirited with my afflictions, I have, by the blessing of God on my endeavours, overcome all difficulties, and, in some measure, acquitted myself of the debt which I owed the public when I undertook this work.'

There is no brag about these passages; the facts bear them out. Dryden rose to his greatest in failure, and impressed himself most on his contemporaries when he was a sick and overtoiled man. His triumph was a triumph of character; so that his works cannot stand to us for all that the living man meant to his own generation. They were first collected in a single edition by Sir Walter Scott, more than a hundred years after Dryden's death. They vary enormously in merit. Some were written for money; some to oblige friends; on one page is a jingle of ephemeral trash, on another a whole succession of those magnificent couplets which he had at command when the occasion called forth all his powers. He belongs to the careless race of great writers, who do not correct their errors, but bury them under new achievement. They carry, and carry easily, a burden of faults that would crush a lesser man to the earth.

There is something very impressive in the sure emergence of character. Subtlety of wit, breadth of understanding—these are only an engine, useless without the steadiness of purpose that controls them. Without depreciating Johnson's works, we may admit that we should not know him well if we knew nothing of his life. It is our misfortune that we know very little of the life of Dryden. He was almost worshipped by the young men whom he befriended and encouraged. Yet none of them has left more

than slight, casual references to his conversation and manners. Johnson, whose youth was spent within the reach of oral tradition, complains that they had little to tell.

> 'Of the only two men whom I have found', he says, 'to whom he was personally known, one told me that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him, and the other related that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony; and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.'

The explanation of this, I think, is simple. Dryden was not a good talker. His character of himself is that he 'never could shake off the rustic bashfulness' which hung upon his nature, that he was 'saturnine and reserved, and not one of those who endeavour to entertain company by lively sallies of merriment and wit'. He was bred to writing, says one of his enemies, 'and knew not what to say'. In this respect he is a complete contrast to Thomas Shadwell, his chief opponent, of whom Rochester said that 'if he had burnt all he wrote and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet'. Cibber says that Dryden was a very bad reader of his own verse; his delivery was 'cold, flat, and unaffecting'; so that he was in every way ill equipped to hold a company by continuous discourse. It is not difficult to guess what happened at Will's. The younger men—and they were all younger than Dryden—carried on animated debates and combats. He listened benevolently from his chair of authority. The manner in which, from time to time, he took snuff, was, no doubt, keenly observed as an indication of his sympathies. When, at a crisis, he was appealed to, he uttered, not arguments, but verdicts. His recorded sayings are

not very striking, but they are nearly all brief. The most delightful of them, which is also the briefest, is given by Fenton ; it shows how completely authorship and the art of letters filled the thoughts and talk of the company. Dryden was fond of fishing, and would not allow any skill in that craft to bad writers, like Tom D'Urfey :

> By long experience, D'Urfey may no doubt
> Ensnare a gudgeon, or sometimes a trout ;
> Yet Dryden once exclaimed, in partial spite,
> '*He fish !*'—because the man attempts to write.

The famous war on Dullness, as a crime proper to authors, and their worst crime, began with Dryden and the professional circle that formed around him.

If Dryden had died just before he was fifty, he would have had a minor place in the annals of our literature ; indeed, it may be doubted whether he would have been so highly esteemed as Shadwell, who died at that age. As a young man of decent family and small fortune he had followed the literary fashions of the time; not without great merit, yet it would be hard to discern the splendour of his matured powers in his heroic plays or in his eulogies of the great. Then came the last crisis of the fortunes of the Stuart dynasty, the crisis which gave us our constitutional monarchy and our modern party system. The proposal to exclude the Catholic Duke of York from the throne passed the House of Commons, and rent the nation in two. The Whigs, led by Shaftesbury, favoured the claims of the Duke of Monmouth, the natural son of Charles II, and a great popular favourite. The position was saved by the king, who having to choose between a son and a brother, became serious for once, and, neglecting his own ease and safety, declared himself immovable on the side of the lawful heir. To disinherit James was one thing ; to override

Charles quite another; for if he was not highly respected, he was much liked, and his just championship of his brother won the sympathy and admiration of the people. The leaders of the House of Commons drove their advantage too hard, and the reaction was swift. Shaftesbury was arrested and thrown into prison to stand his trial for high treason. His one chance of escape was that the Grand Jury of the City of London, which was a Whig stronghold, would refuse to find a true bill. It was while Shaftesbury lay in the Tower, awaiting his trial, that Dryden issued his first famous satire, *Absalom and Achitophel.* He meant it to do its work, and to procure the conviction of the Whig leader. It is the deadliest document in English literature, splendid in power, unrelenting in purpose. The lines in which he praises Shaftesbury's upright conduct on the bench did not appear in this first edition. Dryden was taking no risks. But his pamphlet failed in its immediate purpose; the Grand Jury threw out the bill; the Whig party celebrated Shaftesbury's release by striking a medal in his honour, and Dryden, after returning to the charge in his satire called *The Medal*, had time to look about him and to deal out late vengeance on Shadwell, Settle, and the writers on the other side, who are crucified in *MacFlecknoe* and the Second Part of *Absalom and Achitophel.*

All four of these great satires fall within a single year. Dryden was a well-known dramatist and poet, but he issued them all anonymously. They produced a sensation greater than any printed pamphlet had ever produced in England. I do not remember any other case of a pamphlet designed to achieve a particular end, pointed to the occasion, topical and allusive in every line, which gained at once, and retained ever after, a place among our great national classics. The effect it produced may be well measured by the poems

written in its praise, while yet the author remained unknown. The verse of *Absalom*, says Nathaniel Lee, is ' divinely good ', each syllable is a soul. It is

> As if a Milton from the dead arose,
> Filed off the rust, and the right party chose.

Nahum Tate, who afterwards became Dryden's collaborator, discerned in the new author a great poet :

> The rock obey'd the powerful Hebrew guide,
> Her flinty breast dissolved into a tide ;
> Thus on our stubborn language he prevails
> And makes the Helicon on which he sails ;
> The dialect, as well as sense, invents,
> And, with his poem, a new speech presents.
> Hail then, thou matchless bard, thou great unknown,
> That give your country fame, yet shun your own !

What these praises mean is that Dryden was recognized at once, as he is recognized still, for the first of the moderns. He ' filed off the rust ' ; he discarded the antique poetic trappings, and proved that poetry could do work in the world. I confess that when I look through the collected poems of Dryden I am amazed by his completely modern attitude to all the old traditions. Take a trivial but significant instance. In *The Secular Masque* he introduces a chorus of the heathen divinities, who describe the changes that time has wrought in the world. Diana celebrates the sport of hunting beloved by the court of James I, and then joins with Janus, Chronos, and Momus, in a festive chorus :

> Then our age was in its prime :
> Free from rage and free from crime.
> A very merry, dancing, drinking,
> Laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time.

The whole masque resembles nothing so much as

a Drury Lane pantomime. And Dryden's innovations in language were, to his own age, no less startling. He was content to make use of the colloquial speech of the day, the speech in which men traffic, and quarrel, and discuss, but he used it with such intensity and conciseness that he raised it to a higher power. The satirists who came before him had either beaten the air, like the Elizabethans, or had been fanciful, grotesque, and metaphysical, like Butler and Cleveland. They dressed themselves in cobwebs; Dryden wore a suit of armour. Men of the world had been accustomed to deal with poetry as a very good thing in its own place, when you have the time and the taste for it. You cannot deal thus with what you fear. Dryden compelled them to find the time.

If any one protests that the highest poetry, like the purest mathematics, can do no work, I do not desire to quarrel with him, so long as no attempt is made to deprive Dryden of the name of a great poet. Among the many definitions of poetry it is wise to choose the broadest. To exclude from the name of poetry work which is artistically ordered in strong and polished verse by an imagination of extraordinary scope and power, is a wretched impoverishment of thought and of speech.

The charge that has most frequently been brought against Dryden is that he was, to put it bluntly, a time-server. He celebrated Oliver Cromwell in ringing stanzas. He also celebrated the Restoration of King Charles II. He defended the position of the Church of England in a grave poem, full of weighty reasoning. When James II came to the throne he joined the Roman Communion, and, continuing in his office of Poet Laureate, wrote *The Hind and the Panther* in defence and praise of the Church of Rome. Men who change their religion after the age of fifty cannot expect to pass unchallenged, especially if the

change happens to conduce to their material advantage.

Johnson and Scott were not puzzled or perturbed by these changes in Dryden, nor was their admiration for him, as man and poet, impaired at all. Indeed, I think that any one who takes the trouble to make acquaintance with Dryden's writings and the records of his life will find that there is no puzzle to solve. All through his life Dryden changed, or moved, steadily, in a single direction; he moved, and he never went back. Those who fiercely demand consistency in a political career commonly mean by consistency the repetition of a party cry. Their ideal character is the parrot, who never forgets what he was taught in youth, and never tires of repeating it. They make no allowance for experience, and none for thought—that bugbear of the drill sergeant, which will not stop when you cry 'Halt!' Dryden was born of a Puritan family and passed his youth in the religious and political chaos of the Commonwealth. It is not easy for us to realize what a lesson was there. A course of reading in the works of the fanatics and visionaries of the seventeenth century, each with his own scheme of government and of salvation, is enough to make an anarchist sick of freedom. The Church of England commended itself to Dryden, first of all, and for a time, as a decent haven of refuge from the noise of the sects. The authority of the Bible was allowed by all the sects, but there remained the difficult question—Who was to interpret the Bible? The Papists, says Dryden, withheld it from the common people; the Protestants gave it to all—with what effect?

> The Book thus put in every vulgar hand,
> Which each presumed he best could understand,
> The common rule was made the common prey;
> And at the mercy of the rabble lay.

The tender page with horny fists was galled;
And he was gifted most that loudest bawled;
The spirit gave the doctoral degree,
And every member of a Company
Was of his trade and of the Bible free.
Plain truths enough for needful use they found;
But men would still be itching to expound;
Each was ambitious of th' obscurest place,
No measure ta'en from knowledge, all from GRACE.
Study and pains were now no more their care;
Texts were explained by fasting and by prayer:
This was the fruit the private spirit brought;
Occasioned by great zeal and little thought.
While crowds unlearned, with rude devotion warm,
About the sacred viands buzz and swarm,
The fly-blown text creates a crawling brood;
And turns to maggots what was meant for food.
A thousand daily sects rise up, and die;
A thousand more the perished race supply:
So all we make of Heaven's discovered will
Is, not to have it, or to use it ill.
The danger 's much the same; on several shelves
If others wreck us or we wreck ourselves.

These lines, it is plain to see, express the sentiments of a friend to authority. Dryden believed in authority in religion, and monarchy in the State, even when the monarch's name was Cromwell. He was attracted, by the natural bent of his mind, to monarchy in religion—that is, to an indisputable power which should pronounce on all doubtful points. He never writes more vigorously or with more fervour of conviction than when he attacks the engineers of democracy. So in his sketch of Shaftesbury's career, in *The Medal*—if you will excuse a long quotation—

When his just sovereign, by no impious way,
Could be seduced to arbitrary sway;
Forsaken of that hope, he shifts the sail;
Drives down the current with a pop'lar gale;
And shows the fiend confessed without a veil.

He preaches to the crowd that power is lent,
But not conveyed to kingly government;
That claims successive bear no binding force;
That coronation oaths are things of course;
Maintains the multitude can never err;
And sets the people in the papal chair.
The reason 's obvious; *int'rest never lies*;
The most have still their int'rest in their eyes;
The power is always theirs, and power is ever wise.
Almighty crowd! thou shorten'st all dispute;
Power is thy essence; wit thy attribute!
Nor faith nor reason make thee at a stay,
Thou leapst o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way!
Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,
When Phocion and when Socrates were tried;
As righteously they did those dooms repent;
Still they were wise, whatever way they went.
Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run;
To kill the father and recall the son.
Some think the fools were most as times went then,
But now the world 's o'erstocked with prudent men.
The common cry is ev'n religion's test;
The Turk's is, at Constantinople, best,
Idols in India, Popery at Rome,
And our own worship only true at home,
And true but for the time, 'tis hard to know
How long we please it shall continue so;
This side to-day, and that to-morrow burns;
So all are God a'mighties in their turns.
A tempting doctrine, plausible and new;
What fools our fathers were, if this be true!
Who, to destroy the seeds of civil war,
Inherent right in monarchs did declare:
And, that a lawful power might never cease,
Secured succession, to secure our peace.

No doubt it would be possible to go over all that Dryden here says, to state it in another way, and to make out a case on the other side. But it is not easy, if indeed it be possible, to plead for a novel order of things by way of satire. Satire entrenches itself naturally in old habits and accepted customs. People

laugh at what is unfamiliar to them. Marcus Crassus is said to have laughed when he saw an ass eating thistles, but he probably laughed alone, which is no very happy way to laugh. The part of life that is not subject to custom and habit is a very small part, so that the satire of eccentricities and deviations from the beaten track has a wide empire and, in spite of occasional mistakes, is, for the most part, sane. Some wits of our own time have attempted to combine the advocacy of new views with satire directed against those who fail to be converted by them. The combination of the two professions, evangelist and buffoon, has a delightfully quaint air, but it robs the evangelist of all his efficacy. One simple soul makes more converts than many jesters. The terrible superstitious power of laughter is witnessed by this anxious care of nervous reformers to laugh first. They are afraid of ridicule, and try to intimidate their satirists by laughing at them. But this is a sign of weakness, for no one is hurt by laughter until he thinks he is hurt.

One of the great fascinations of Dryden's satire is its perfect ease of application to our own time. The divisions of opinion, the foibles, and the characters that he describes are alive among us to-day. Only the power and the will to satirize them have grown feebler. One reason of this, no doubt, is that our differences, for all their violence, are less fundamental and less tragic. A generation which had seen the king of England led to the block was in no danger of under-estimating the gravity of political differences. Almost all the political problems of to-day bear a likeness to the problems of the seventeenth century; but the colours of that earlier picture are darker and stronger. We are perhaps humaner than they; we are certainly more humanitarian. We do not behead those who are opposed to us, we do not even condemn them; we explain them. Explanation is a subtler

kind of satire, and it is touched, as Dryden insisted that all good satire should be touched, with concession, and even with sympathy. But we have to pay for our gains; and we have lost the grand style. When Richard Pigott, the informer, broke down, and took his own life, he was pitied more than he was hated. Far different was the case of Titus Oates, who, to work up Protestant frenzy against the Duke of York, invented a whole network of falsehoods concerning the Popish Plot. Titus Oates became an idol of the people for a time. Mr. Traill, summarizing the historical evidence, describes him as 'a squat, misshapen man, bull-necked and bandy-legged, with villainous low forehead, avenged by so monstrous a length of chin that his wide-slit mouth bisected his purple face'. But he was worshipped as the defender of the faith. (See *Spectator*, No. 57.) Dryden deals with him in lines that vibrate with scorn. Not even in the Roman satirists could you find four lines so packed with meaning and invective as the first four of Dryden's attack:

> Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass;
> Erect thyself thou monumental brass:
> High as the serpent of thy metal made,
> While nations stand secure beneath thy shade.

And the controversies of modern authors, whether in verse or prose, are like the mewing of cats compared with Dryden's attack on Shadwell:

> A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull
> For writing treason and for writing dull;
> To die for faction is a common evil,
> But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.
> Hadst thou the glories of thy king exprest,
> Thy praises had been satire at the best;
> But thou in clumsy verse, unlickt, unpointed,
> Hast shamefully defied the Lord's anointed:
> I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
> For who would read thy life that reads thy rimes?

> But of King David's foes be this the doom,
> May all be like the young man Absalom;
> And for my foes may this their blessing be,
> To talk like Doeg, and to write like thee.

Perhaps I spoke too lightly, a minute or two ago, of the injury that can be wrought by laughter. Shadwell, as any one who reads his plays can witness, is a dramatist of real merit, with great breadth of humanity. But his plays soon fell out of demand, and none of them was ever reprinted until a few years ago.

> The temple-gates of Fame to him were shut;
> He lived outside, and lived as Dryden's butt.

As for his satire, written in reply to Dryden's *Medal*, it is a rarity for collectors. When I went to the Bodleian Library to see it for the purposes of this lecture, I found that they had mislaid it, so that Dryden's contempt not only blasted his reputation, but perhaps has indirectly prevented my making any attempt to restore it.

I must not pass over Dryden's greatest enemy, the statesman and demagogue, Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury. To discuss his character and career would take me too far afield. It was not a simple character. If you do no more than take notice of Dryden's allowances and concessions, you will see at once that Shaftesbury can never be painted all black, or all white. He was a just and compassionate judge. He was of an indefatigable industry, and sought no private profit. He was courageous, even to rashness. Dryden's fiercest onslaught on him is directed against the demagogue. Shaftesbury took pleasure in the craft of statesmanship, and delighted in his own dexterity in handling public opinion. As Butler says of him he

> Would force his neck into the noose
> To show his play at fast and loose.

He was insatiable in his desire for power, and when against his advice the king withdrew the Declaration of Indulgence to Roman Catholics and Dissenters, he threw in his lot with the Opposition, and cultivated the arts of popularity. The people forgive much in those who declare for them, and Shaftesbury's share in promoting the war with Holland, a Protestant ally of England, was forgiven when he espoused the Whig cause. Dryden's comment describes the conveniences of popularity:

> How safe is treason and how sacred ill,
> Where none can sin against the people's will,
> Where crowds can wink and no offence be known,
> Since in another's guilt they find their own!

The gist of Dryden's charge against Shaftesbury is not that he represented the people but that he deceived them. He encouraged opinions that he did not share, if he thought he could make use of them. He stirred up envy and hatred, which are more easily awakened than put to sleep again. There is no doubting the sincerity and the passion of the apostrophe that concludes *The Medal*:

> But thou, the pander of the people's hearts,
> (O crooked soul and serpentine in arts;)
> Whose blandishments a loyal land have whored,
> And broke the bonds she plighted to her lord;
> What curses on thy blasted name will fall!
> Which age to age their legacy shall call;
> For all must curse the woes that must descend on all.

History has something better to do (or, at least, something more interesting to do) than to fulfil the predictions of impassioned prophets. The warfare of party has raged on, with varying fortunes, for more than two hundred years since Dryden wielded his two-edged sword, and the honours are still divided. But it would be a mistake to regard Dryden as first and foremost a party man. No mere party pamphleteer

ever has won, or ever could win, the place that he holds in English letters. He is of the centre; his party is the party of Aristophanes and of Rabelais. His best work is inspired by the sanity that inhabits at the heart of things. He lived in a turbulent age, and he was a fighter. But all extremists are his natural enemies. His weapons can be used, on occasion, by either side. He hated wrong-headed theorists and fanatics, who commonly impose their alliance, a heavy burden, on the reforming party in the State. He also hated all contented and self-sufficient dullards, who for the most part have to be supported, a grievous weight, by the party that stands for the established order. He makes war on both, with laughter that flashes and cuts. There are many provinces of poetry, some where poetry is most at home, that are strange to him. His love lyrics are, with very few exceptions, a miracle of banality. His best dramas just fall short of greatness. But in prose criticism, as in argumentative verse, and in metrical satire, he has not been surpassed. Not many authors have achieved the highest rank in three such diverse kinds.

If Dryden has failed to captivate some lovers of poetry it is perhaps because he deals, almost exclusively, with public affairs. Even religion is treated, throughout his argumentative poems, in one aspect only, as a public interest. Were it not for one or two allusions to his advancing years, his works would give you no clue to his private life and retired meditations. If war, politics, and argument were banished from the face of the earth, nothing would be left for him to say, or at any rate he would say nothing. Congreve remarked that Dryden was the most modest man he ever knew; and certainly he is one of the most reserved of poets. He does not take his readers into his confidence; he has no endearing indiscretions. He

is content to meet them in an open place, where there is business enough to bespeak their attention. A professional man of letters, especially if he is much at war with unscrupulous enemies, is naturally jealous of his privacy; he will be silent on his more personal interests, or, if he must speak, will veil them under conventional forms. So it was, I think, with Dryden; he is no bosom friend, to be the companion of those who keep the world and its noises at a distance. Those who do not care for Dryden may well care for poetry; it is difficult to believe that they can care for politics, war, or argument. And Dryden's resolutely public attitude has a purification of its own; it disciplines the more secretive and furtive passions by forcing them out into the light and air. War, after all, is the cleanest kind of hate; and, by its awful ordeal, often transforms hate altogether into pride and pity and sorrow. Something of the same kind may be said of great satire like Dryden's. The ugliness and squalor of personal hostility cannot live in that tonic atmosphere. The resentments of men are touched to larger issues, and raised above themselves. What is murky and little and obscene is drawn by the graving tool of the artist, with never a line in vain, and becomes a strong and noble thing, a possession for ever.

GEORGE SAVILE[1]

It would have given no displeasure to Sir George Savile, First Marquess of Halifax, to think that by later generations of his countrymen he should be almost forgotten. Statesmen are easily forgotten. A prosperous lie made Titus Oates immortal; but the man who was the practical genius of the English Revolution, and the acutest critical genius among English politicians, is now little more than a name. What is most commonly remembered about him is that he was called the 'Trimmer'. The nickname was put upon him angrily by his contemporaries, and was worn proudly by himself. The imputation it conveyed was, no doubt, that he trimmed his sails to the varying breezes of opinion; but in his famous pamphlet, the noise of which still echoes distantly in the public ear, he changed the metaphor. A boat, he said, goes ill, and is in danger of capsizing, if the people in it weigh it down all on one side, or all on the other. But there is a kind of men 'who conceive that it would do as well if the boat went even, without endangering the passengers'. And it is hard to imagine, he adds, how it should come to be a fault, or a heresy, to attempt to trim the boat.

He calls it a boat (he never used magnificent or extravagant language), but what he means is the ship of State, that ship on whose seaworthiness the lives even of the mutineers depend. Halifax was a pilot for the greater part of his responsible life, and his chief care was always the State. His reputation has none of that glamour which shines upon heroic folly. The leader of a forlorn hope excites a ready enthusiasm; the martyr for an idea, the rebel who will have his

[1] Introduction to *Complete Works of George Savile, first Marquess of Halifax*. Oxford, 1912.

own way or nothing, the stickler for principle, who cares little to stay in a world where his darling creed is not to prevail—all these are easily made into heroes, and worshipped for their courage. But the pilot, to whom danger and difficulty are not heroic crises, but the very material of his craft, or the engine-driver, who has had the care of a thousand lives in his sole charge, goes home unnoticed, and takes his modest wage. On his constancy and judgment the safety of humanity depends; his faith and skill have made it possible for the thoughtless passengers to dream in peace and to warm their imagination with the admirable deeds of fiction. Life would be a poorer thing than it is if work of this kind were rewarded by monuments and testimonials and public fame. The old Roman way is better: expect the best from your political servants, and try them for treason if they give you less.

Not many men have written books on the practical business of their lives. Statesmen have commonly been content to make laws, or treaties, leaving it to philosophers to expound the principles of politics. It is the fascination of the writings of Halifax that they were suggested by his experience of life, and are crammed with the lessons drawn directly from that experience. Here are no flights of the imagination, no ingenious ornaments of style, no beautiful vanities of authorship. He quotes none of those fallacious historical precedents which are dear to the mind of the academic scholar; his writings are bare of classical allusion. What he has to tell is what he has found out for himself in the course of his traffic with the world; but he tells it with so much wit and irony, with such acuteness of observation and pungency of phrasing, that he runs some risk of losing the esteem of those who think that wise men must needs be dull. Moreover, books have failed, from time immemorial,

to convey the lessons of experience; and the wisdom of life can be bought only by the expenditure of life itself. Old men would be very glad to tell what they know, but they cannot hope to be understood. If they are wise, they say little; if they are foolish, they babble pleasantly enough, but have nothing to tell. Halifax has much to tell, but a beginner is not likely to learn it. On the other hand, a man who has served on a jury, or has stood an election, or has been responsible for the management of any business, will feel a thrill of pleasure when his own experience is brought home to him again in that brilliant epigrammatic dress. English literature is very rich; only a very rich literature could have afforded to neglect so distinguished a writer. But it is not rich in practical wisdom; and the neglect of Halifax is a thing to be regretted and amended.

His writings are strangely modern, and, withal, are wholly English. The politics of this country have altered very little, one would say, since the days of the Exclusion Bill. Indeed it is one of the chief attractions of seventeenth-century history that there is hardly a live question to-day which was unknown to the men of that time. It is something to feel that we are not more fantastic or absurd than our ancestors. Any one who reads the pamphlets which contain Halifax's reflections on the controversies of his own time will find himself, almost against his will, applying these reflections to the matter of to-day. No violence is required to make the application; page after page of the pamphlets might have been written yesterday for all the evidence that they show of bygone modes. It is a fashion nowadays to decry the Party system in politics. Once upon a time (so the argument runs) Party names stood for something real; they marked fundamental and irreconcilable differences of opinion on essential questions. But now they have become

empty of meaning, the pretexts of competitors for power and reward. Such an account of the Party system is not good history. Swift, who lived when the succession to the Crown was a Party question, made light of Whig and Tory, and here, at the very birth of the system, is Halifax, its most destructive critic. The names of Whig and Tory do not occur in his works. He disliked devotion in a conventicle, and loyalty in a drunken Club. He was troubled to see men of all sides sick of a calenture. He knew that men, though they forget much, never forget themselves; and that the World is nothing but Vanity cut out into several shapes. His remarks *Of Parties* in his *Political Thoughts and Reflections* are the severest things ever said about Party:

'It turneth all Thought into talking instead of doing. Men get a habit of being unuseful to the Publick by turning in a Circle of Wrangling and Railing, which they cannot get out of.'

'Ignorance maketh most Men go into a Party, and Shame keepeth them from getting out of it.'

The fact is that the rigours of Party, which are easily maintained, with all their consequences, by logicians, journalists, and theorists, will not suffer the practical test. Men exalt themselves on their principles, and glory in the partition which separates the sheep from the goats, who prove, after all, to be only the other sheep. But the English have a genius for government, and when government is the business in hand, this separatist method has no value. Men who differ rabidly on principles will find that the lessons they learn from experience have a tendency to be the same. Then, if they change their course, or modify the policy which has been so bravely announced, they are accused of being false. The charge is true; they have been false; but it was their thinking and talking that was false, not their corrected action. The melodrama of

their boastful creed would not bear translation into the life of this world. They have been the dupes of literature; all that is heroic in literature is simple and straightforward, but then, the hero is prepared to die. Society is not prepared to die for a creed, and politics is a vast complex network of means to an end, the end being the continued life and comfort of mankind. It is the irony of the statesman's position that while his work is very like the work of a good housekeeper, the literary deceits and fictions incident to the process of persuasion invite us to regard him as a hero of romance, a lone figure on a mountain peak, silhouetted against the moon. 'I think it 's the novels', said the old lady quoted by Mr. Bagehot, 'that make my girls so *heady*.'

The old political families of England, who have borne a hand for generations in the government of the country, are often exempt from these errors. They are not easily intoxicated by public duties, which have been their matter-of-fact business for centuries. You may call them Whig or Tory, it makes little difference; some third name, more fundamental in its implications, is needed to describe them. They look at things instinctively from the point of view of the administration. The fervours of the pulpit and the platform do not much delight them. It was the great advantage of George Savile that he was born into such a family, and was connected by kinship, or by the accidents of life, with many of the most influential persons of that age. Sir Henry Savile, wit and scholar, Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and Provost of Eton, perhaps the most learned Greek scholar of Elizabethan England, was his distant kinsman. The Lord Keeper Coventry was his grandfather. The great Earl of Stafford was his father's uncle. Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, who vies with one other claimant for the credit of being the first Whig, was his uncle by marriage, his colleague,

and, in the end, his rival. Lady Dorothy Sidney, Waller's 'Sacharissa', was his wife's mother. More notable still, the famous Earl of Chesterfield was his grandson. In short, he was intimately connected with most of those whose names fill the pages of English History during the latter half of the seventeenth century, and was a witness of the events of that history from a position of extraordinary vantage. His family, moreover, though staunchly Royalist, managed to keep possession of its estates, and in 1643, when his father, Sir William Savile, after loyal service rendered to the King, died at the age of thirty-one, the young George Savile had the ball at his feet. Concerning his youth and education we know next to nothing. He was born in 1633, and was brought up under the control of his widowed mother, who was a woman of strong character. When she died, in 1662, her son was already married, settled on his estate of Rufford, in Nottinghamshire, and prominent in public life.[1] He was described, later, by Evelyn the diarist, as 'a very rich man, very witty, and in his younger days somewhat positive'. His wit and his riches he kept throughout life; his opinions became less positive. His wit was perhaps his chief fault; he could not keep it under, or refuse himself a pointed jest. 'One great argument', says a contemporary account, 'of the prodigious depth and quickness of his sense is, that many of his observations and wise sayings were on the sudden, when talking to a friend or going from him.' The spontaneity and freedom of his talk was ill taken by Clarendon and other cautious and explanatory persons, and Savile was reputed to be

[1] All who concern themselves with Halifax must acknowledge their great debt to the careful and exhaustive work of Miss Foxcroft, *The Life and Letters of Sir George Savile, Bart., First Marquis of Halifax, &c., with a new edition of his works now for the first time collected and revised* by H. C. Foxcroft. Two volumes, Longmans, 1898.

void of all sense of religion—which he certainly was not. Later, among his *Moral Thoughts and Reflections*, he says, 'There is so much Danger in Talking, that a Man strictly wise can hardly be called a sociable Creature.' This was a lesson that he learned but slowly, if indeed he ever learned it. His conduct of business was discreet almost to a fault; his letters are so prudent and reserved that they are amazingly dull to read; but he indemnified himself for these restraints by the freedom of his intimate conversation. The writings in which he has allowed himself most of this freedom were either non-political, like his *Advice to a Daughter*, or were posthumously published, like his *Character of King Charles the Second: and Political, Moral and Miscellaneous Thoughts and Reflections*. These are the best of his works. That prudence and discretion which keeps a man safe and sequestered in life conceals him also from the notice of later generations; the same caution which delivers him from malicious gossip, puts him beyond the reach of posthumous sympathy. Halifax, the author, appeals to our interest because he says many things which politicians know and do not say. To avoid even paltry enmities may be the clear duty of a statesman. 'It is a Misfortune', Halifax remarks, 'for a Man not to have a Friend in the World, but for that reason he shall have no Enemy.'

The events of his public life, as parliamentary leader, as Minister under Charles II, as President of the Council under James II, and as Lord Privy Seal under William III, are written broad on the history of England, and cannot be recorded here. He bore a hand in all the chief events of the time, from the Restoration onwards, to his death, in 1695. His importance may be well measured by this, that it never depended on the office that he held. He was respected, consulted, and feared in opposition no less

than when he was chief Minister of the Crown. The greatest of his achievements, it will probably be agreed, was the rejection of the Exclusion Bill in 1680 by the House of Lords. No record remains of the speeches made; but the severity and brilliancy of his duel with Shaftesbury is attested by many contemporaries. He stood up to Shaftesbury, and answered him every time he spoke. He carried the House, in the end, triumphantly with him. It was a triumph not so much of argument as of intelligence and insight. He understood the temper of the people of England as Shaftesbury never did, and he knew that the ebullitions of popular enthusiasm are no safe index to that temper. Monmouth was adored by the people; the Duke of York was neither liked nor loved. Shaftesbury thought to earn the nation's gratitude by offering them Monmouth in place of York. He miscalculated cruelly; the people did not fear a new King; but they did fear a Kingmaker. The whole edifice of constitutional monarchy was designed not for the protection of bad kings, but for the humiliation of arrogant ministers. This Halifax understood; so he became the guardian of the Constitution, and later, when James II had set himself to break the Constitution, the guiding spirit of the Revolution. His politics are our politics; his political creed remains in the twentieth century what it was in the seventeenth century, the creed of John Bull. But the rare delight is to find John Bull a wit! Wit is commonly employed in extremes, where it works most easily. To satirize novelty, and ridicule all that is unfamiliar; or, reversing the process, to ridicule all that is familiar, to deny the truth of proverbs and to flout the sayings that embody general opinion—these devices furnish wit with a simple and effective mechanism. But Halifax employs the subtlest resources of wit in defence of the practical expedient, the middle course, the reasonable compromise.

Dryden pays tribute, in *Absalom and Achitophel*, not only to the wit of Halifax, but to his courage and eloquence:

> *Jotham* of piercing Wit and pregnant Thought,
> Endew'd by nature and by learning taught
> To move Assemblies, who but onely tri'd
> The worse a while, then chose the better side;
> Nor chose alone, but turned the Balance too;
> So much the weight of one brave man can do.

Indeed, for all that he is called the Trimmer, Halifax has been very generally recognized for an upright and honourable man. He was promoted, by steady gradation, to high honours and high offices, yet no one has been found foolish enough to pretend that he was a self-seeker. Macaulay, who expresses some distrust of him in the *Essays*, and introduces him, in the *History*, as one who was not sufficiently indifferent to titles of honour, makes amends, in a later passage, by a full and generous eulogy:

'What distinguishes him from all other English statesmen is this, that, through a long public life, and through frequent and violent revolutions of public feeling, he almost invariably took that view of the great questions of his time which history has finally adopted. He was called inconstant, because the relative position in which he stood to the contending factions was perpetually varying. As well might the pole-star be called inconstant because it is sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west of the pointers. To have defended the ancient and legal constitution of the realm against a seditious populace at one conjunction, and against a tyrannical government at another; to have been the foremost champion of order in the turbulent Parliament of 1680, and the foremost champion of liberty in the servile Parliament of 1685; to have been just and merciful to Roman Catholics in the days of the Popish plot, and to Exclusionists in the days of the Rye House plot; to have done all in his power to save both the head of Stafford and the head of Russell; this was a course which contemporaries, heated by passion, might not unnaturally call fickle, but which deserves a very different name from the later justice of posterity.'

One stain, and one only, Macaulay finds on his memory, that in the reign of William III he stooped to hold communication with the exiled Court of St. Germain. The fact is not disputed, but a wise judgment on the fact asks for a more active and careful imagination than is usually brought to it. The black-and-white school of moralists are not valuable critics of the politics of the seventeenth century. They would be better employed in writing laudatory biographies of the authors of *Histriomastix* and *Εἰκὼν βασιλική*. For many years it was not certain who was King of England. It was not certain whether England was to be a monarchy or a commonwealth. Many patriotic Englishmen had been driven abroad, and hardly a man of note had not relatives in France. In these civil conflicts, which divide families, the law of treason must needs be humanely interpreted; and the offence proved against Halifax amounts only to misprision of treason; that is to say, he did not cut off all confidential relations with his friends and acquaintance on the other side.

This, at any rate, is certain, he never for one moment sought any other end than the security and greatness of England. He very early recognized that one portentous question was beginning to obscure the whole political horizon. 'The Greatness of France,' wrote the English Envoy at Lisbon, 'as I have heard your Lordship observe, hath made all old politics useless.' So, in 1668, he welcomed the Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden, to hold Louis XIV in check. So far, his politics were the politics of William of Orange. But William of Orange was a European statesman and general; Halifax was purely an Englishman. He was glad to have the help of alliances, but he did not like to have to trust to them. Real friendships between nations are things of very slow and difficult growth; while friendships between govern-

ments are subject to the dangers and disadvantages of friendships between two bodies of trustees representing different interests. If such friendships are immutable, they are dishonest. Halifax was not deceived by them. In a letter to Sir William Temple, written shortly before the Triple Alliance was concluded, he discusses the possibility of a French invasion, and concludes: 'We must rely upon the Oak and Courage of England to do our Business, there being small Appearance of anything to help us from abroad.'

Many fine things have been said of England by Englishmen; none of them more sincere and moving than the things said by Halifax. He is a quiet writer, critical and sceptical, keenly aware of the absurdity of enthusiasm. He keeps his feelings so well in hand that he has the reputation of a cynic. But this is how he writes of England:

'Our *Trimmer* is far from Idolatry in other things, in one thing only he cometh near it, his Country is in some degree his Idol; he doth not Worship the Sun, because 'tis not peculiar to us, it rambles about the World, and is less kind to us than others; but for the Earth of *England*, tho perhaps inferior to that of many places abroad, to him there is Divinity in it, and he would rather dye, than see a spire of *English* Grass trampled down by a Foreign Trespasser: He thinketh there are a great many of his mind, for all plants are apt to taste of the Soyl in which they grow, and we that grow here, have a Root that produceth in us a Stalk of English Juice, which is not to be changed by grafting or foreign infusion; and I do not know whether any thing less will prevail, than the Modern Experiment, by which the Blood of one Creature is transmitted into another; according to which, before the *French* blood can be let into our Bodies, every drop of our own must be drawn out of them.'

When these words were written England stood in greater danger of invasion than she has known at any later time, unless it were in the time of Napoleon. Halifax had seen the Navy driven off the sea by the

Dutch, and the shipping in the Thames burnt, yet the people were slow to awake to their danger. In the pamphlet entitled *A Rough Draught of a New Model at Sea*, which was published in 1694, but was probably written earlier, he tries to awaken them. He knew the difficulty of the attempt.

'A Nation is a great while', he observes, 'before they can see, and generally they must feel first before their Sight is quite cleared. This maketh it so long before they can see their *Interest*, that for the most part it is too late for them to pursue it: If Men must be supposed always to follow their true *Interest*, it must be meant of a New Manufactory of Mankind by God Almighty; there must be some new *Clay*, the old *Stuff* never yet made any such infallible Creature.'

Yet the means to safety was clear, and he puts it in the forefront of his argument:

'I will make no other Introduction to the following Discourse, than that as the Importance of our being strong at *Sea*, was ever very great, so in our present Circumstances it is grown to be much greater; because, as formerly our Force of Shipping contributed greatly to our *Trade* and Safety; so now it is become indispensibly necessary to our very *Being*.

'It may be said now to *England*, *Martha*, *Martha*, thou art busy about many things, but one thing is necessary. To the Question, What shall we do to be saved in this World? there is no other Answer but this, Look to your Moate.

'The first Article of an *English-man's* Political Creed must be, That he believeth in the Sea, *&c.* without that there needeth no General Council to pronounce him incapable of Salvation here.'

This is all very modern, and so also are his recommendations in the matter of commissions in the Navy. It is perhaps no bad vindication of his opinions that they are in complete agreement with the best practice of the Navy from that time to this. There were those who held that all naval officers should be gentlemen born, as there were others who held that they should all be *tarpaulins*—that is, men who had been bred

from boyhood to the rough work of practical seamen. He discusses the merits and faults of both sorts of officer, and rejects both proposals as evil extremes. There must be a mixture, he holds, of the two classes, in a proportion to be determined by experiment and circumstance; and the dangers that may attend the mixture are to be avoided by one main precaution:

'The *Gentlemen* shall not be capable of bearing Office at *Sea*, except they be *Tarpaulins* too; that is to say, except they are so trained up by a continued habit of living at *Sea*, that they may have a Right to be admitted free *Denizens* of *Wapping*.'

There must be an end of sending idle young noblemen to sea in positions of authority.

'When a *Gentleman* is preferr'd at *Sea*, the *Tarpaulin* is very apt to impute it to Friend or Favour: But if that *Gentleman* hath before his Preferment passed through all the Steps which lead to it, so that he smelleth as much of *Pitch* and *Tar*, as those that were *Swadled* in *Sail-Cloath*; his having an *Escutcheon* will be so far from doing him harm, that it will set him upon the advantage Ground: It will draw a real Respect to his Quality when so supported, and give him an Influence and Authority infinitely superior to that which the *meer Sea man* can ever pretend to.'

A sailor can never be fit to command till he has learned to obey; nor can he be trusted to inflict punishments to which he has never been liable.

'When the undistinguish'd *Discipline* of a Ship hath tamed the young Mastership, which is apt to arise from a *Gentleman's* Birth and Education, he then groweth Proud in the right place, and valueth himself first upon knowing his Duty, and then upon doing it.'

The experience of the two wars with Holland had plentifully illustrated the evils of which Halifax speaks; it was his own knowledge of human nature which directed him so clearly to the remedy.

The works of Halifax all belong to the last ten years

or so of his life. The earliest of them, *The Character of a Trimmer*, is a complete handbook to the politics of the closing years of Charles the Second's reign. The *Letter to a Dissenter* and *The Anatomy of an Equivalent*, which followed it within a few months, are directed against James the Second's famous attempt to buy off the hostility of the Dissenters by including them in his project of toleration. None of these tracts, when first printed, bore the author's name. The naval tract mentioned above, and the tract entitled *Some Cautions Offered to the Consideration of Those who are to Chuse Members to Serve for the Ensuing Parliament*, are also anonymous, and are his latest writings. When the ensuing Parliament came to be elected he had been six months dead. All his worldly wisdom shines in this last tract, which, again, applies almost without change to the circumstances of to-day. The last satirical injunction has a strangely familiar ring:

'In the mean time, after having told my Opinion, Who ought not to be Chosen:

'If I should be ask'd, Who ought to be, my Answer must be, Chuse *Englishmen*; and when I have said that, to deal honestly, I will not undertake that they are easy to be found.'

In some ways his *Advice to a Daughter*, which, alone among the writings published during his lifetime, seems to have been carefully prepared by his own hand for the press, is the most attractive of his works. It was written for his daughter Elizabeth, who became the wife of the third Earl of Chesterfield, and the mother of a famous son. The habit of giving advice to the younger generation would appear to have been hereditary in the family. But Halifax's social maxims are more profound than Chesterfield's, as his political maxims are more profound than Bolingbroke's. The book was immensely popular; it ran through some twenty-five editions, and held the field for almost a century, to be superseded at last by Dr. Gregory's

Father's Legacy and Mrs. Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*. The *Advice* is somewhat melancholy in tone. The author sets before his daughter no ideas of self-advancement, and indulges her with scant hopes of happiness. There is too little room in his scheme for the holiday virtues, and the free play of impulse. 'Whilst you are playing full of Innocence, the spitefull World will bite, except you are guarded by your *Caution*.' His words are a prophylactic against the inevitable ills of life. His section on a Husband is devoted mainly to considerations which may palliate a husband's faults and vices. His commandments are commandments without promise. There is to be no relaxation; life is one long fencing-bout. 'You are to have as strict a Guard upon yourself amongst your *Children*, as if you were amongst your *Enemies*.' This is a wise remark, but it does not make home seem a place of warmth and ease. The same cold good sense and discernment govern his thinking on such topics as Religion and Friendship. He is judicious, sane, and balanced, but he does not think of the world as a cheerful place.

Yet, with all this, there is something very moving in his solicitude. His high principles of conduct and his deep affection for his daughter peep out unwittingly here and there. It is small wonder that the book was cherished by her, and lay always upon her table. The calm of the perfectly well-bred style forbids all direct expression of the emotions, but the impression it makes is all the greater. 'When my *Fears* prevail, I shrink as if I was struck, at the Prospect of *Danger*, to which a young Woman must be expos'd.' His concluding advice on the article of marriage has a pathos of its own:

> 'That you would, as much as Nature will give you leave, endeavour to forget the great *Indulgence* you have found at home. After such a gentle Discipline as you have been under,

every thing you dislike will seem the harsher to you. The tenderness we have had for you, *My Dear*, is of another nature, peculiar to kind Parents, and differing from that which you will meet with first in any Family into which you shall be transplanted; and yet they may be very kind too, and afford no justifiable reason to you to complain. You must not be frighted with the first Appearances of a *differing Scene*; for when you are used to it, you may like the House you go to, better than that you left; and your *Husband's* Kindness will have so much advantage of ours, that we shall yield up all *Competition*, and as well as we love you, be very well contented to Surrender to such a *Rival*.'

Something of the same fragrance makes itself felt in the worldly wisdom of his advice concerning Censure:

'The Triumph of *Wit* is to make your *good Nature* subdue your *Censure*; to be quick in *seeing Faults*, and slow in *exposing* them. You are to consider, that the invisible thing called a *Good Name*, is made up of the Breath of Numbers that speak well of you; so that if by a *disobliging Word* you silence the *meanest*, the *Gale* will be less strong which is to bear up your *Esteem*. And though nothing is so vain as the eager pursuit of *empty Applause*, yet to be well thought of, and to be kindly used by the world, is like a *Glory* about a Womans *Head*; 'tis a Perfume she carrieth about with her, and leaveth where-ever she goeth; 'tis a Charm against *Ill-will*. *Malice* may empty her Quiver, but cannot wound; the Dirt will not stick, the Jests will not take; Without the consent of the World a *Scandal* doth not go deep; it is only a slight stroak upon the injured Party and returneth with the greater force upon those that gave it.'

The *Character of King Charles II* is a masterpiece. Perhaps no such intimate portrait of an English King, drawn by a contemporary, is to be found in the whole course of our history. It makes us regret that Halifax has left us so few descriptions of the persons whom he knew. The tendency to aphorism and epigram is strong, and the *Character* is full of brilliant sentences. 'Men given to dissembling are like Rooks at play, they will cheat for shillings, they are so used to it.'

'Mistresses are in all Respects craving Creatures.' But the dispassionate analysis of the King's character and motives; the account given of the effect of his early misfortune on his disposition; and the incidental pictures, for those who read between the lines, of the daily life of the Court;—all these are as convincing as a scientific demonstration. The King's ruling passion, the love of ease, was never so vividly drawn. Nothing to him was worth purchasing at the price of a difficulty. We see him surrounded by a crowd of importunate beggars of both sexes; he would walk fast to avoid being engaged by them. 'He would slide from an asking Face, and could guess very well.' When he was brought to bay, he would buy off his tormentors by large concessions for the sake of present ease. In this way 'the King was made the Instrument to defraud the Crown, which is somewhat extraordinary'. It is plain to see, for all the delicacy with which the Royal foibles are described, that Lord Halifax was not perfectly happy in the familiar company that the King kept about him. 'His Mistresses were such as did not care that Wit of the best kind should have the Precedence in their Apartments.' The King delighted in broad allusions, and made fun of those who would not join in. He had a good memory, but told stories too often, and at too great length. He appreciated wit, but (and here is a cry from the soul) 'of all Men that ever *liked* those who *had Wit*, he could the best *endure* those who had *none*'. Yet the natural amiability and sweetness of Charles's temper shines through all the description. There is a certain attractiveness in his impatience of the formalities of his position; his tendency to relapse into Charles Stuart and so regain the freedom of a private estate. The closing eulogy on this unfortunate and gentle Prince is a sincere and true testimony from a competent witness:

'A Prince neither sharpened by his Misfortunes whilst

Abroad, nor by his Power when restored, is such a shining Character, that it is a Reproach not to be so dazzled with it, as not to be able to see a Fault in its full Light. . . . He is under the Protection of common Frailty, that must engage Men for their own sakes not to be too severe, where they themselves have so much to answer.'

The *Political, Moral and Miscellaneous Thoughts and Reflections* is the most notable English collection of Maxims, the nearest parallel and rival to the work of La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère. Popular proverbs, it has often been remarked, are not very generous in their treatment of humanity; and a writer of aphorisms, which are proverbs coined in a private mint, is open to the same charge. An aphorism is an act of judgement, and so can pretend to no higher merit than justice, which is not the greatest of human virtues. The beauties of human character are vague and living things; the deformities lend themselves more readily to be outlined by a decisive pencil. Yet the aphorisms of Halifax never sacrifice sense to wit, and always provoke thought. His political reflections, especially, could only have been written by a statesman of experience. He is often severe, but he is no cynic. 'Men must be saved in this World', he says, 'by their Want of Faith'; but he was not so foolish as to deny the existence of unselfishness. 'It is a Mistake to say a Friend can be bought.' In his *Character of King Charles II*, commenting on the insatiability of the King's followers, he falls into the same vein of argument:

'I am of an Opinion, in which I am every Day more confirmed by Observation, that Gratitude is one of those things that cannot be bought. It must be born with Men, or else all the Obligations in the World will not create it. An outward Shew may be made to satisfy Decency, and to prevent Reproach; but a real Sense of a kind thing is a Gift of Nature, and never was, nor can be acquired.'

Yet even sincere Friendship has its weaknesses. 'Those Friends who are above Interest are seldom above Jealousy.'

The aphorisms of Halifax are a better guide to the world as it is than all the brilliancies of his epigrammatic French contemporaries. His satire bears no trace of disappointed ambition or poisoned egotism. Some of his sayings are condensed treatises in their weight of thought. Why is it that popularity is so often suspect? He puts his finger at once on the answer. 'Popularity is a Crime from the Moment it is sought; it is only a Virtue where Men have it whether they will or no.' Who has ever defined a Fool better than in these few words: 'A Fool hath no Dialogue within himself, the first Thought carrieth him without the Reply of a second'? How could the verdict of mankind on plaintive persons be more truly expressed than in the sentences on *Complaint*?—

'Complaining is a Contempt upon ones self:
'It is an ill Sign both of a Man's Head and of his Heart.
'A Man throweth himself down whilst he complaineth; and when a Man throweth himself down, no body careth to take him up again.'

There is very little mention made of Halifax in the writings of his contemporaries. Though he held a conspicuous station, he seems to have passed through life observing rather than observed. A fascinating sketch of him is given in Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, as he appeared to that prelate of unbounded energy and coarse perceptions. Virtue may win over vice; but intelligence cannot make a convert of stupidity. Burnet, whose power in the State came late in Halifax's career, is a good example of the bluff, hot-headed partisan, to whom it is impossible to doubt that right is all on one side. Halifax, we are told by a contemporary, 'was never better pleased than when he was turning Bishop Burnet and his politics into ridi-

cule'. Burnet's verdict on Halifax will not mislead those who have heard the Trimmer speak for himself:

'He was a man of a great and ready wit; full of life, and very pleasant; much turned to satire. He let his wit run much on matters of religion, so that he passed for a bold and determined atheist; though he often protested to me he was not one; and said, he believed there was not one in the world: he was a Christian in submission: he believed as much as he could and he hoped that God would not lay it to his charge, if he could not digest iron, as an ostrich did, nor take into his belief things that must burst him: if he had any scruples, they were not sought for, nor cherished by him; for he never read an atheistical book. In a fit of sickness I knew him very much touched with a sense of religion. I was then often with him. He seemed full of good purposes, but they went off with his sickness. He was always talking of morality and friendship. He was punctual in all payments, and just in all his private dealings. But, with relation to the public, he went backwards and forwards, and changed sides so often, that in conclusion no side trusted him. He seemed full of commonwealth notions, yet he went into the worst part of King Charles's reign.'

He is the last of the long line of statesmen who found it possible to govern England without paying allegiance to party. Their day is past; and the party system is stronger now than it was in the time of the Jacobites and Hanoverians. No better method has ever been devised for the peaceful settlement of differences of opinion on domestic questions. The nation is not prepared to revive the custom of impeaching unpopular ministers. Englishmen sometimes rail at party, as they rail at cricket and football, but they know that there is no escape from it. It deceives vainglorious partisans, no doubt, and it offends righteous philosophers; but it suits the national temper. Yet there is no need to be duped by it; and any one who tries to think clearly on politics must be a very wise man, or a very foolish one, if he gets no help from the writings of the Marquess of Halifax.

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS[1]

Among all the nugatory quarrels that have engaged the irritable and expressive race of authors, the dispute that arose at the end of the seventeenth century, concerning the comparative merits of the Ancients and Moderns, might seem, for intrinsic vanity, to bear away the bell. Academic in its origin, it might, at first sight, be condemned as academic also in its essence. Whether Milton is a greater or less poet than Virgil, whether Molière is to be ranked above or below Aristophanes for wit, whether Aristotle or Descartes had the more penetrating intellect, are questions seldom asked in our own day, save by those who are paid to puzzle the students of a University or the future rulers of India. Debating societies nourish their idle dialectic on just such knotty points. And, indeed, the very history of the famous dispute seems to declare it both artificial and trivial. When Charles Perrault, the versatile architect, who first broached the question at a session of the French Academy in 1687, had successfully aroused the ire of the great classical critic of the age, his paradox had doubtless served its immediate end. Sir William Temple, who opened the English campaign with his 'Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', was a retired statesman, who beguiled his leisure with gardening and the classics. The greater combatants were drawn into the fray by the merest accident, or chapter of accidents. A single error of Sir William Temple's gave Richard Bentley an opportunity for the display of his marvellous scholarship, and Jonathan Swift seized the occasion to

[1] Reprinted from *Cosmopolis*, February 1897.

exercise upon the presumption of the Moderns that splendid satirical power which, in its more mature development, chose for its adversary the human race. But these two were auxiliaries and free-lances in the main action, with ends of their own to serve; Bentley, after taking the *spolia opima* from the generals of the Ancients, retired into his private tent, and Swift concentrated his fury upon the party of the Moderns, because he knew them better than the Ancients, and could attack them with more effect. The fortunes of the main battle were confused rather than determined by the single-handed exploits of these brilliant adventurers, their prowess served merely to illuminate some of the minor incidents in a long and dull campaign. Long and dull though it be, it is worthy the attention of the student of literature and the historian of thought, nor are the issues involved so trifling as they appear. The comparison of individual champions on the one side or the other is, no doubt, as futile as the question whether a black pawn is better or worse than a white; pawns take their value from their position on the chess-board, and the board in this case was as wide as human thought and human activity. The stakes for which the game was played were no less than the ideals of progress and of science, the right of a nation to its own literature, the enfranchisement of art from the eternal reproduction of old models, and of science from the dogmatic pedantry of the schools. The war began with the Renaissance of Learning, and found no close with the Revival of Romance. It is no matter for wonder, therefore, that in France, where the study of literature has borne its best fruit, the subject has attracted the attention of critics and historians, and has been minutely illustrated by the admirable treatise of M. H. Rigault.[1] In

[1] H. Rigault, *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1859. Tome i, *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes.*

England, the controversy, although derivative in its origin, developed on different lines, and certain aspects of it, little apparent in the works of Fontenelle and Perrault, Boileau and Madame Dacier, come into noteworthy prominence in the hands of the English supporters of the two parties. The waging of the war around the names of certain selected ancient and modern worthies lent itself to diversity of treatment. Differences on a well-defined point of principle are soon reconciled, or seen to be irreconcilable; in quarrels about persons, on the other hand, the antagonists engage through interest or taste, and are compelled to define principles for themselves. In this process of definition the intellectual tendencies of an age or country are manifested; the main battle in England rages round a point that lay in the neglected outskirts of the French quarrel.

The seeds of all the strife lay hid in the complexities of the Renaissance. That great vague event by its very name implies the resuscitation of the ancient world to preside at the birth of the modern. Aristotle, who, from being a man and a Greek, had sunk into a system and a dogma, Aquinas, who was Aristotle sainted, were cast out from their universal empire, and the new world apprenticed itself to the pagan civilizations of Greece and Rome. It was inevitable, when the first fine excess of superstitious veneration had spent itself, when the scholars and antiquaries had done their work, that the awakened nations of Europe should seek to better the instructions given them, and should match themselves with their masters in original achievement. The restorer and editor of texts gave way to the translator, and he in his turn to the poet; the reasoner, who based the structure of his thought on a skilful arrangement of quotation quarried from the works of the ancient philosophers, saw rising beside him other palaces of truth, compact of new material

won by infinite labour from the bowels of the earth itself. The craft learned in the schools of the Ancients was put to new and unexampled uses; epics took for their subject the mysteries of the Christian religion; systems subversive of ancient tradition were wrought by Descartes and Bacon, and signed with their names. Yet this emancipation from the servitude of apprenticeship was not achieved in a day; the very splendour of the old models held the new workers long enthralled, and, in the realm of the arts at least, originality was often the outcome of modesty. Ariosto wrote his great poem in Italian, because by writing in Latin 'he thought he could not attain to the highest place of praise, the same being before occupied by divers, and especially Virgil and Ovid'. Milton, a century later, alleges the same reason for his choice of the English tongue, although patriotism had its due weight with him as with Ariosto, and he, too, was willing 'to enrich his own language with such writings as might make it in more account with other nations'. Yet a century later, and Gray's early ambitions preferred the Latin before his native tongue, while even the author of the English Dictionary could not be induced by the united supplications of his friends to write Goldsmith's epitaph in the language of which he was the greatest living master. So slowly did the native speech of Shakespeare vindicate its right to appear on occasions of ceremony in its own country.

In the French Academy it was the Moderns who instituted the comparison and began the fray; in the world at large it was rather the blind partisans of the Ancients who forced the quarrel on a reluctant adversary by decrying all novelty in art and ridiculing all experiment in science. The great artists and poets of modern times were not guilty of raising their hands, in impious absurdity, against their teachers. Ben Jonson and Milton, Dryden and Gray, to take a few

names of English poets at a venture, are not men whom it is easy to accuse of holding antiquity in light esteem. Even among the pioneers of modern thought, who encountered a much more formidable opposition than the artists, Hobbes translated Homer and Thucydides, and Bacon rifled the treasuries of ancient wisdom. But the very men who reverenced the Ancients most, and most intelligently, found it impossible to avoid all combat, when the great names of old time became the battle-cry and the rallying point of exasperated stupidity and vainglorious pedantry. Foremost among the reactionary influences, whether of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, may be reckoned the English Universities. In the earlier part of the sixteenth century they fought hard against the study of Greek, in the later part it is strange to note how little the men of the Renaissance, the true inheritors of antiquity, owed to them. And in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Universities afforded shelter and alms to the pugnacious dotage of scholasticism. The earliest historian of the Royal Society, in discussing the corruptions of learning, indicates with great clearness the weakness of these venerable institutions. 'Seats of knowledge', he says, 'have been for the most part heretofore, not laboratories, as they ought to be, but only schools, where some have taught and all the rest subscribed.' Hence follows 'not only a continuance, but an increase of the yoke upon our reasons'; and the most docile of pupils becomes the most imperious of masters, when, by a vicious circle, he who learns only that he may teach succeeds to the office of him who taught only as he had learned. The Universities therefore, the home of those who 'hastily catch things in small systems, before they have broken their pride', usurped the championship of the Ancients, and tilted with all the weight of an organization against the free valour

of the best of their offspring. Yet the quarrel, although espoused by them, was not theirs by right. For the Renaissance itself was a twin birth, and the two movements for which it is a name were fated from the first to come into conflict. The one sought a closer study of ancient masterpieces in art and letters, and a reverent discipleship, the other sought an escape from the tyranny of the Ancients in the domain of science and philosophy. The one movement might be typified by the discovery of Plato, the other by the discovery of America. In their early union against Mediaevalism, these inherent differences of character were overlooked, or undeveloped, and it was not so easy then as it is now to perceive that the allies attacked their foe for opposite reasons; the one because the mediaeval world had betrayed the teaching of the Ancients in art and letters, the other because it had adopted and organized the teaching of the Ancients in science. When the din and smoke of that conflict had begun to clear away, the successful allies became rivals, and the followers of Galileo or of Descartes found their critics and assailants in men who, like themselves, were the children of the Revival of Learning. This perhaps is the main aspect of a difference which received no formal expression until the end of the seventeenth century, and no adequate treatment until much later. In the discourses contributed to the quarrel, whether in England or France, questions of style and of thought, of art and of science, are entangled in bewildering confusion; Homer is impugned for the ignorance of Hippocrates, and the discoverer of the circulation of the blood incurs a share of the learned contempt that is lavished on *Gondibert*. Nor are the issues plain to disentangle by the light of history, for the new philosophy claimed and exercised a strong influence on English literary style; while, on the other hand, scholars deeply read in the lore of the Ancients knew

how little of fundamental wisdom, civil and ethical, was left for the Moderns to discover, and cheapened the fruits of physical science by the comparison. Nevertheless the quarrel may be regarded as lying mainly between the Arts on the part of the Ancients, and the Sciences on the part of the Moderns; the various purely literary or purely scientific points involved may be treated as side issues. It is the chief interest of the English quarrel that it brings this aspect into high relief. It has never been easy in England to bespeak public attention for a question of literary criticism, and such in the main was the question debated in France. But the rapid growth of scientific research in the seventeenth century, the foundation of the Royal Society, the extravagant expectations entertained by its members and admirers, and the existence of a large body of wits and theologians who flung themselves into opposition, were circumstances favourable to the simplification, in England, of the issues involved in the original debate. Between the sciences and the abetters of polite learning the English battle was fought, and its outcome, tardily apparent, was no victory, but a definition of the causes of conflict, a general amnesty, and a partition of the empire of human knowledge and human activity between the belligerents. The treaty whereby this pacification was effected bears no name, and its authority is still from time to time set at naught by a Hebrew scholar who combats the conclusions of geology, or a physicist who applies laboratory methods to determining the nature and destiny of the soul. The quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns marks the beginning of that long process whereby there arose the system of federated provinces which is modern learning, and the chaos of options which is modern education.

Cross issues, darkening and blurring the main question that underlies the English struggle, there

were in plenty, never to be enumerated in a single essay. One of these should, perhaps, be mentioned, if only to be set aside. The great men of Greece and Rome, as has often been remarked, were pagans, and the early Revival of Learning had to encounter a strenuous opposition based on that fact. It might therefore be expected that the forces of theology would be found arrayed against the Ancients. So it was in the early centuries of Christianity; so it was, again, at the time of the Renaissance. But before the later controversy came to a head, this older feud had been settled on a basis of practical compromise. Christianity agreed to commit to the Ancients a fair share in the education of the young, and an almost complete autocracy in matters of poetry and taste. There still were fervent and logical minds, both in France and England, that demurred to one or other of these concessions. The question of the fitness of Christian story and doctrine for poetic treatment was long a burning one; Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, one of the earliest French assailants of the Ancients, chose this ground for his attack, and illustrated his theory in the sacred poem of *Clovis*, which Boileau could not read. About the same time Cowley attempted a Biblical epic in the *Davideis*, which satisfied neither himself nor his admirers, and was left incomplete. It was Boileau who formulated the verdict of the majority of seventeenth-century critics in his refusal to allow poetic imagination to cast the glamour of fable on the severe truths of Christianity by adorning them with superfluous fiction. The publication, a few years earlier, of Milton's amazing poem has often been cited to the discredit of the French critic, but *Paradise Lost* proves nothing. Its strange blend of the Calvinistic theodicy with the pagan fables, of zeal for the old poetry with a lively interest in the new science, makes the greatest poem in the English language an

exposition of nothing but its author; and Johnson, who praised it without restraint, held fast by the opinion of Boileau. That opinion, however lamentably justified by the example of most so-called sacred poems, rests in theory on a conception of poetry at once depreciatory and tolerant. For the age of Louis XIV or of Queen Anne poetry was one of the decorative arts, the works of Lucretius were relegated to the domain of ornament and fancy, and the mysteries of Christianity confined, with equal rigidity, to the domain of fact. The demarcation was complete, the fortification of the frontier strong, and an elegant code of international comity permitted the cultivation of a polite acquaintance with the famous Ancients. But the new philosophers, the Cartesians and the men of Gresham, who were marking out the site of their new Atlantis in the very heart of the domain of fact, could hardly be regarded by the orthodox world with the same complacent suavity. Their claims were large, and, worse than large, indefinite. Already they had encroached on sacred precincts, and, in spite of their protests of esteem, they seemed likely to encroach farther. Thomas Burnet, whose *Theory of the Earth* had a share in suggesting to Sir William Temple the desirability of humbling the Moderns, startled the public only a few years later by propounding, in his *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692), an allegorical interpretation of the first few chapters of Genesis. Education and instinct alike, the pride that took pleasure in an innocent commerce with the classics, and the fear that divined an endless heritage of strife from the pretensions of the Moderns, combined to throw the Church, forgetful of past differences, into the arms of the Ancients. Enlightened Churchmen not a few, like Bishop Wilkins, Glanvill, and Sprat, were to be found in the very front ranks of the Royal Society. But that they were conscious of the novelty of their position is

shown by their passionate professions of orthodoxy, their exclusion of theology from the scope of their method, and their indignant vindication of themselves and their fellows from the oft-repeated charge of atheism. The Church at large was against them, and the wits, for once in a way, in the reign of King Charles II sided with the Church. Thus it was that the brunt of the battle on the side of the Moderns was borne in England by the upholders of science, and the literary and artistic excellences of the modern world found no capable exponent. William Wotton, who wrote a book in answer to Sir William Temple's essay, gives away one-half of the cause of his party with almost indecent alacrity, in order that he may win a more favourable consideration for the other half—the claims of modern research. His choice of concession is doubtless wise, but a better fighter might have found it worth while to mention Shakespeare, whose name is not once invoked from the beginning to the end of the quarrel proper.

To find the counterpart of the literary dispute that made such a stir in the French Academy the English historian must hark back to an earlier period. The rebellion against the rule of the Ancients in matters of literature could never gather force in England, where from the first they had exercised a strictly limited monarchy. In the time of Elizabeth the attempt was made to impose on English poetry the despotism of classical models, and was successfully and decisively resisted. The tide of the Renaissance reached these shores so late, and came at last with such overwhelming suddenness, that before purely classical learning had time to establish itself in secure mastery a crowd of newer models, Italian farces and romances, French essays and sacred poems, came huddling on its heels. In the two topics of fiercest debate, the observance of the conventions of the classical drama and the

introduction of classical quantitative measures, the Elizabethan party of the Ancients was defeated by the accomplished fact rather than by the arguments of their opponents. *Tamburlaine* and the *Faerie Queene* were more effective than a shopful of pamphlets for the laying of those broils. The populace applauded the romantic drama, the new romantic metres sang in the heads of the young, and the destinies of the national literature were settled at a blow. The old controversies lingered on tediously, without audience. Already, before the end of the century, England had poets and dramatists who might be matched, by the enthusiasm of their eulogists, with the proudest of the Ancients. Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* sets up such a comparison at length, ordering poetry according to its kinds, and quoting an array of inconsiderable English names under each head, with the name of Shakespeare thrown in ubiquitously as a makeweight. But this pedantic little treatise is undertaken only by way of literary pastime, the Moderns are pleasantly glorified at no cost to the Ancients. Similarly the tract included in Camden's *Remains*, wherein the worthiness of the English tongue is set forth, owed the suggestion of its theme to Estienne's *Précellence de la Langue Françoise*, and dealt with a question that no longer hung in the balance. A more serious import must be attached to Ben Jonson's famous verses, for he speaks with authority, and there is something more than friendship, or the licence of an epitaph, in his setting the tragedies of Shakespeare over against the works of the mighty three:

> Or when thy socks were on,
> Leave thee alone for the comparison
> Of all that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome,
> Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

As if to vindicate the gravity of his judgment, Jonson grants the same merit to one other of his

contemporaries, even to the repetition of the phrase. The Lord Verulam, he says in his *Discoveries*, hath 'performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome'. This pair of names can support the national cause better than all the light-armed troops enrolled against the Latins by Meres.

Complimentary comparisons of this kind, it may be said truly, make no quarrels. They are incidental to an age that took its very quality from the classics, and accepted them as the standard of literary measurement. Nevertheless, the elements of the later French dispute may be found in Elizabethan England, and if they smouldered to extinction, it was for lack of fuel. Those who had never been galled by the yoke of the classics could not attempt to throw it off, but they defied the repeated attempts to impose it. The last echoes of this war for the preservation of independence may be caught in Samuel Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* (1601). Directed ostensibly to the support of a single position, this noble treatise takes occasion to survey the whole field of action. In his dramas Daniel followed classical precedent; for the rest he was an assured romantic. The question of rhyme is the least part of his pamphlet; it is handled briefly and fitfully. In our modern stanzas, he says, 'the apt planting the sentence where it may best stand to hit the certain close of delight with the full body of a just period well carried, is such, as neither the Greeks or Latins ever attained unto'. But he passes on to wider considerations, and in more places than one anticipates Fontenelle and Perrault. 'The distribution of gifts is universal, and all seasons have them in some sort. We must not think but that there were Scipios, Caesars, Catos, and Pompeys, born elsewhere than at Rome; the rest of the world hath ever had them in the same degree of nature, though not of state.' An

eloquent and appreciative defence of the Middle Ages is brought in with an exordium that shows Daniel at his best, for catholicity of judgment and tuneful cadence of prose:

'Methinks we should not so soon yield up our consents captive to the authority of antiquity, unless we saw more reason; all our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of nature as well as they, we are not so placed out of the way of judgment but that the same sun of discretion shineth upon us; we have our portion of the same virtues as well as of the same vices, *et Catilinam quocunque in populo videas, quocunque sub axe*. . . . It is not the observing of their trochaics nor their iambics that will make our writings aught the wiser; all their poesy, and all their philosophy, is nothing, unless we bring the discerning light of conceit with us to apply it to use. It is not books, but only that great book of the world, and the all over-spreading grace of Heaven that makes men truly judicial. Nor can it but touch of arrogant ignorance, to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature man, wheresoever he stand in the world, hath always some disposition of worth, entertains the order of society, affects that which is most in use, and is eminent in some one thing or other that fits his humour and the times.'

That is finely said; it contains, in epitome, the best of the case for the Moderns, and makes of comparison an instrument of appreciation, not of contempt. The later solution of the literary controversy is here foreshadowed. But in England the memory of the abortive conflict died away, and the national literature, free to follow its own bent, strayed farther every year from the simplicity of classic models. Ovid had always exercised a more potent influence than Virgil on the English literature of the Renaissance, but Ovid is a hermit for austerity by the glittering conceits of Donne and his followers. The theory of the new English poetry was set forth by Davenant with some amplitude in his preface to *Gondibert* (1651), wherein the defence of his own poem is rested on a belittling

of the Ancients. Homer, says the author, has proved 'rather a guide for those whose satisfied wit will not venture beyond the track of others, than to them who affect a new and remote way of thinking, who esteem it a deficiency and meanness of mind to stay and depend upon the authority of example'. This utterance might be taken for a defence of the remote and unexampled figures with which the poem is crowded, but Davenant is not satisfied with defence. The ancients were not only lacking in the true salt of wit, they were guilty of a gross and positive fault in the introduction of supernatural machinery. One by one they are summoned to the bar; one by one they are condemned on the same count—for their unnatural fictions. Statius stands convicted of following Virgil, as Virgil followed Homer, 'where Nature never comes, even into Heaven and Hell'. This complaint is the cry, not of outraged piety, like that of Desmarets, but of offended rationalism. And Hobbes, to whom the preface was addressed, lifted hands of blessing, and predicted that *Gondibert* 'would last as long as either the *Aeneid* or the *Iliad*, but for one disadvantage; and the disadvantage is this: the languages of the Greeks and Romans (by their colonies and conquests) have put off flesh and blood, and are become immutable, which none of the modern tongues are like to be'. He followed the way of praise that Davenant showed him, and whereas Sidney, in the sixteenth century, had commended the ancient poets for their notable invention of 'Heroes, demi-Gods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such-like', Hobbes falls foul of them for their 'monsters and beastly giants'. Waller and Cowley took their tune from the philosopher, and swelled the chorus with commendatory verses in honour of the book:

> Which no bold tales of Gods or Monsters swell,
> But human passions, such as with us dwell.

'Davenant,' said Cowley, 'like some adventurous knight-errant, had invaded the fairyland of poetry, and rescued it, by virtue of his sacred arms, from the cursed race of enchanters and demons, restoring it to Truth and Nature.'

Had King James I, as he was urged to do, founded an Academy of Letters, there might have been a place of honour for the response to this challenge. Even in their scattered and distracted state, the Royalist wits were not so preoccupied with politics as to let it pass unnoticed. A few of them banded together to pelt the unfortunate poet with epigram and to ridicule the judgment of his admirers. But this 'mob of gentlemen' was fitter to banter Davenant's personal deformities than to undertake the serious defence of the Ancients on the ground that he had chosen for his attack. Indeed, one of the most fashionable diversions of the wits lay in travesties of the classical epics, depending for their mirthful effect on a ribald parody of the divinities of the Ancients. Davenant's *Return to Nature* was no crotchet or fancy of his own, but a faithful following of the spirit of the time; the Nature that he returned to was the Nature, not of the poets, but of the new school of philosophers; and the conquest of literature by philosophy was crowned with a theory of diction, propounded for the occasion by Hobbes, to the effect that poetry should borrow its expression not chiefly from books, 'the ordinary boxes of counterfeit complexion', but from experience and a knowledge of Nature.

The seventeenth century in England was pre-eminently the age of the rise of Science. From the death of Bacon onwards the proposals for an English Academy that appeared from time to time were, for the most part, like Evelyn's, Cowley's, and Sir William Petty's, schemes for the endowment of experimental research. When at last, in 1662, the 'Invisible

College' received its charter, and became the Royal Society, the feud between the Ancients and the Moderns broke out afresh. The Moderns were now incorporate, and therefore easier of attack; they were subjected to a running fire of derision and invective. Evelyn wittily compares the assailants of the Society to Sanballat the Horonite and the rest of those who laughed to scorn the building of Jerusalem, and eloquently adds—'let us rise up and build!' But most of the wit was on the other side, and when ridicule of the Puritan grew stale, the new 'virtuoso' took his place as a stock subject of satire. Samuel Butler in his later years directed his shafts of wit against the new Society for its credulity and the triviality of its researches; Shadwell, in his play *The Virtuoso*, treats scientific research as a 'humour' or mental twist, and embodies the new philosophy in Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, who holds that ''tis below a Virtuoso to trouble himself with men and manners', but is deeply seen in the nature of ants, flies, bumble-bees, and earwigs. The mathematical and physical sciences soon put themselves, by the work of Newton and Boyle, beyond the reach of contempt, although in 1661 the assertion of the motion of the earth was still entertained, on the testimony of Glanvill, with the hoot of the rabble. It was on the achievements of these sciences, and on the physiological researches of Harvey, Willis, and others, that Wotton based the most important part of his case for the Moderns. But the long infancy of chemistry and biology gave burlesque an enduring theme; Gay, Goldsmith, and Johnson, each in his turn drew satirical portraits of the men who proceed, 'laborious in trifles, constant in experiment; without one single abstraction by which alone', according to Goldsmith, 'knowledge may be properly said to increase'.

There is no doubt that the new philosophy had

a profound influence on literature as well as on thought, and that the foundation of the Royal Society gave to scientific questions in England something of the public prominence that literature enjoyed in France. In the first place, many of its original members were men of letters, interested in questions of style, and some of them set themselves to remedy the excesses of English prose. Glanvill, in his *Vanity of Dogmatising*, attacks 'the vain idolizing of authors, which gave birth to that silly vanity of impertinent citations, and inducing authority in things neither requiring nor deserving it'. Sprat, in his *History of the Royal Society*, devotes an admirable passage to a description of the mists and uncertainties brought upon knowledge by the specious tropes and figures of eloquence, and proposes the formal establishment of an English Academy to bring the language to its last perfection. That the efforts of these men, and others like-minded, had a very real influence on practice is witnessed by Wotton at the close of his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*. The new philosophy, he says, in the course of half a century has almost abolished pedantry; and the young men of his own time are taught 'to laugh at that frequent citation of scraps of Latin in common discourse, or upon arguments that do not require it, and that nauseous ostentation of reading and scholarship in public companies, which formerly was so much in fashion'. In short, the 'virtuosi' bore their own share in bringing in the lucid and elegant style of the age of Queen Anne.

In the second place, the extravagant speculations and fantasies of the men of Gresham, which naturally gained a wider notoriety than their more sober researches, alienated scholars, and gained for them the reputation of fanatics. They were too apt, in the public advocacy of their cause, to discount the future revenue of science at a liberal estimate, and take it out

in immediate self-sufficiency. 'Should these heroes go on', says Glanvill, the ablest writer of them all, 'as they have happily begun, they will fill the world with wonders. . . . It may be some ages hence a voyage to the southern unknown tracts, yea, possibly the moon, will not be more strange than one to America.' He goes on to speak, in a passage that long echoed in literature, of the invention of wings, the restoration of juvenility to the old, and the turning of the earth into a paradise by improvements in agriculture. Visions such as these moved philosophers like Hobbes to remind experimental science of its limits, and to deny to its apostles an exclusive property in the Millennium; by men of culture, like Temple, they were attributed to the pretentiousness of ignorance. It is impossible, without a knowledge of the controversies that surrounded the Royal Society, to understand the indignation that moved Temple to write his essay. His ears had been besieged for decades with the self-gratulation of the new age. In the peace of his retirement, with old books for his companions, there reached him the noise of the French quarrel. It may be that Saint-Evremond had introduced the question some years earlier into the polite circles and literary coffee-houses of England. But it is certain that Temple's contribution to the discussion drew more than half its inspiration from the quarrels that had raged around the early steps of the Royal Society. The question of literary criticism he was willing enough to treat, but in England it lacked interest, for there were no pretenders to be humbled, except Davenant, who was long dead. The arrogance of the Moderns was embodied for the time in the promulgators of the experimental philosophy. Against them, therefore, the retired statesman directed the keenest shafts of his urbane raillery.

Thus in 1692, with Sir William Temple's essay, the

quarrel proper began in England. Temple was well equipped in one way, for he was thoroughly conversant with the French quarrel, and his diplomatic career had kept him in touch with polite circles in France. Further, he owned an almost passionate attachment to poetry, and criticized it with spirit and judgment from a distinctly romantic standpoint. But there his qualifications ended; for the heroic labour that he undertook his knowledge of the classics was hardly adequate, and his acquaintance with the sciences must have been gathered from conversations unwillingly overheard. He was unfortunate, moreover, or unwise, in the line of argument he marked out for himself, and in the tone he adopted. The Moderns were prodigiously serious in their pretensions, and Temple, from the elevation of his urbanity, might have reproved their self-esteem without exposing himself to any dangerous retort. Determined as he was to dogmatize, he might still have learned from Fontenelle, whose *Digression sur les anciens et sur les modernes* he had read, how well an air of moderation may be made to carry off the easy generalizations of a brilliant talker. But he was bent on gaining a victory all along the line, and in the effort to exhaust his subject he ran into a hundred blunders. The genuine merits of the Moderns he depreciates or disallows. 'There is nothing new in Astronomy', he remarks, 'to vie with the ancients, unless it be the Copernican system; nor in Physic, unless Harvey's circulation of the blood.' Even these, he suggests, are imperfectly established, or perhaps were known to the ancients, and are, in any case, of little use to the world. Of the arts in England, all the knowledge that he cares to display might have been gathered by an ambassador from abroad in three weeks. Sidney, Bacon, and Selden are the only English authors deemed worthy of praise. English music is ignored, but Orpheus and Arion are

allowed to plead their great renown. If there were one law for the Greeks and for the English, Merlin, Taliessin, and Guy of Warwick should have been summoned along with the Seven Sages, and permitted to establish their case by bringing evidence as to character.

Most of the errors of the essay, if they had not been exposed by Macaulay, could very readily be corrected by Macaulay's school-boy. But the business would be at least as idle as the other tasks imposed upon that repulsive young gentleman by his creator, for the basis of Temple's position is not a reasoned belief, but a prejudice. All the hollow apparatus of conjecture whereby he derives Greek learning from Egypt, China, and the Brahmins, is the merest flummery, concealing a method of proof that begs the question. Man starts on his journey through the ages well provided with the luggage of learning, and the trifles that he accumulates in his later days cannot compensate the magnificent losses of his prime. What he possesses of value he must have brought; what he lacks he has probably lost. Temple disbelieved in progress, and held, with Sir Thomas Browne, that 'tis too late to be ambitious. Yet his prejudice is his virtue, and the finest and truest sentences in the essay draw their strength from perennial founts.

'What would we have', he cries, 'unless it be other natures and beings than God Almighty has given us? The height of our statures may be six or seven feet, and we would have it sixteen; the length of our age may reach to a hundred years, and we would have it a thousand. We are born to grovel upon the earth, and we would fain soar up to the skies. We pretend to give a clear account how thunder and lightning (that great artillery of God Almighty) is produced, and we cannot comprehend how the voice of man is framed, that poor little noise we make every time we speak. The motion of the sun is plain and evident to some astronomers, and of the earth to others, yet we none of us know which of them moves,

and meet with many seeming impossibilities in both, and beyond the fathom of human reason and comprehension. Nay, we do not so much as know what motion is, nor how a stone moves from our hand when we throw it across the street. Of all these that most ancient and divine writer gives the best account in that short satire, "Vain man would fain be wise when he is born like a wild ass's colt".'

There speaks the humane scholar and man of the world, convinced, from his experience and reading, of the infinite littleness of human affairs. The same ideas, in language as eloquent, had been employed by Glanvill to abash the confidence of the Aristotelians; and, indeed, they leave the question at issue where they found it. In a second essay, written in answer to some of his critics, and published posthumously, Temple points his criticisms more explicitly at 'the airy speculations of those who have passed for the great advancers of knowledge and learning these last fifty years'; and makes excellent fun of the universal medicine, 'which will certainly cure all that have it', the philosopher's stone, 'which will be found out by men that care not for riches', the universal language, 'which may serve all men's turn when they have forgot their own', the art of flying, 'till a man happens to fall down and break his neck', and the new world in the moon, where the modern sages, whose dreams are wilder and less witty than those of Ariosto, may perchance find their lost senses. He died in the belief that the new movement which his manhood and age had witnessed was a melancholy aberration of decadent humanity.

Temple's first essay made some stir in the world; it was translated at once into French, and was answered in England by William Wotton, chaplain to the Earl of Nottingham, in a treatise entitled *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694). Wotton treats his distinguished adversary with an almost timorous

deference, but his book is remarkable for its breadth of view and for the real acquaintance with contemporary science that it displays. Its treatment of the question that called it forth is enlightened and judicial, nothing is unduly pressed, and nothing insolently assumed. It is interesting to note Wotton's complaint that 'natural knowledge' had fallen from the esteem it enjoyed twenty years before, and that experimental research, which weathered the attack of its theological adversaries, was beginning to lose vogue under the steady stream of public ridicule, so that those who had opulent fortunes and a love of learning shrank from exposing themselves to obloquy. But the interest of Wotton's book soon paled in the glare of a fiercer dispute. In the course of his dissertation on ancient literature, Temple had specially commended Phalaris and Aesop as the two earliest writers of Greek prose. This called forth, on the one hand, a new edition of the *Letters of Phalaris*, by the Hon. Charles Boyle, in 1695; and, on the other, a demonstration of the spuriousness of those letters in an essay contributed to the second edition of Wotton's book by Richard Bentley. The details of the famous war that ensued have engaged many pens, and are irrelevant to the main battle, which, indeed, was suspended, that the rival hosts might enjoy the spectacle of that combat of heroes. Swift's *Battle of the Books*, written in Sir William Temple's house, but not published till 1704, and Bentley's great *Dissertation* of 1699, are monuments that have preserved the memory of the lesser, and by that means also of the greater, quarrel. In one sense they may be said to close the strife, for the attention of the public was never led back to the original issue. In another, they furnish that long confused war with its crowning paradox. That Swift, whose relentless steel was placed at the service of the Ancients, should have been recommended by his

patron, some years before, for employment at the Gresham College, is a small matter, not without its interest. But that Bentley, the best classical scholar of his day, should have made his entry from the side of the Moderns, has been an enduring cause of wonder to later critics. It is true that he paid scant attention to the larger issue, contenting himself with showing that Phalaris and Aesop (or, rather, those who assumed their names) were no Ancients, and that Temple and Boyle were no scholars. But he was fighting single-handed, in any case; he had enemies in both camps; and, in spite of his friendship for Wotton, it would have been easy for him, had he so desired, to claim the right of championing the Ancients in place of Temple. He indicates, in passing, that Temple's praise of the oldest authors might have been more appropriately illustrated by the names of Homer and Archilochus. For the rest, he refused to mingle in the main action. 'Your controversy', he writes to Wotton, 'I do not make my own, nor presume to interpose in it. 'Tis a subject so nice and delicate, and of such a mixed and diffused nature, that I am content to make the best use I can of both Ancients and Moderns.' It may well be that the whole dispute seemed to him trifling.

Yet in truth there is more than accident in Bentley's league with Wotton; by sympathy and circumstance he was a Modern. With the polite society that railed at the Greshamites he was comparatively unacquainted, some of his fastest friends were members of the Royal Society, and he himself had delivered the first course of lectures provided for under the bequest of Robert Boyle. The science of scholarship which he professed had more in common with the newer sciences than with the flimsy culture of the wits. Herein may be seen the most important difference between the French and English quarrels. In the salons of Paris the cause

of the Moderns was popular, while the more erudite of French scholars did battle for the Ancients. The polite assemblies of England, on the contrary, for reasons that have been partially indicated, were all for the Ancients; 'young gentlemen of great hopes' like Charles Boyle, men of the world like Sir William Temple, men of letters like Dryden and Shadwell, wits like Atterbury and Swift, united to cast on the party of the Moderns the imputation of bad taste and defective education. In France the partisans of the Ancients ran a risk of being looked upon as fusty pedants. 'Platon est jugé,' said Perrault, 'il ne plaît pas aux dames,' and if the epigram was only half serious, the tribunal was real enough. The same reference to the opinions of the fashionable world was resorted to in England, but by the other side. Boyle himself, in the firm grasp of Bentley, endeavoured to make the authenticity of the letters of Phalaris a question of polite taste, wherein of course the pedantry of the King's librarian could be ruled out of court. Sir William Temple, 'the most accomplished writer of the age', had openly declared in favour of the epistles, 'and the nicety of his taste', adds Boyle, 'was never, I think, disputed by such as had any themselves'. Polite society being the court of appeal, taste and good breeding were the judges, and the case was to be settled by a trial of wits. Thus scholarship and science could be made to look equally awkward by being compelled to don the fashionable court dress. Learning, as it was understood in the social circles that gave the law to literature, consisted in a smattering of the Ancient tongues, a ready gift of expression in the Modern, and a pretty taste in the arts. 'Mr. Bickerstaff,' says Gay, speaking of Steele's *Tatler* in 1711,

'has convinced our young fops and young fellows of the value and advantages of Learning. He has indeed rescued it out of the hands of pedants and fools, and discovered the true method

of making it amiable and lovely to all mankind. In the dress he gives it, it is a most welcome guest at tea-tables and assemblies, and is relished and caressed by the merchants on the 'Change. Accordingly there is not a lady at Court nor a banker in Lombard-street who is not verily persuaded that Captain Steele is the greatest scholar and best casuist of any man in England.'

Thus was learning understood among the party of the Ancients in England. The 'pedants and fools' from whom the writer of *The Tatler* rescued it were doubtless scholars like Bentley (if any there were), and men of science like Woodward, whom Gay, with the aid of Pope and Arbuthnot, satirized some six years later upon the public stage. The contemporary society that applauded Boyle was made largely of the elements that united to patronize Mr. Bickerstaff. So that Bentley's signal victory over his antagonist was for fifty years popularly reckoned a defeat.

It is easy, after all, to run to excess in identifying the cause of the Moderns with that of science, exact scholarship, and progress. There was a certain virtue also in the literary men of fashion who settled the authenticity of a text with the wave of a lace ruffle. The Augustan age, to give it its own proud name, did much for English letters. It upheld a literary standard, it naturalized the classic tradition in England, and imposed sense and taste upon the people. If it was too apt to judge of all things in the arts or the sciences by their immediate bearing on manners, culture, and the amenities of life, at least it held those amenities in high esteem, and brought them to a measure of perfection. It held fast by the principle that has raised the scholar of the modern world above the mercenary or servile level of a mechanic—that learning is not a special craft, but the birthright of a gentleman and the ennobling of a peasant. We have divided the realm of knowledge into a hundred autonomous

departments, under the rule of governors, oftentimes barbarous, who allow a doubtful and insecure hegemony to the arts that made the greatness of Greece and Rome. We follow hysterical prophets into the wilderness, and contemn the grey enclosure of Fleet Street that bounded the ambitions of Samuel Johnson. Inured to a squalid society, we magnify the future of the race, and are content with ugliness and rudeness, so our posterity may reap knowledge and wealth.

Doubtless we have chosen the better part; but our civilization, on the broad basis of our new-found hopes, is yet to be achieved. The Augustans indulged their vision with a narrower horizon, and cultivated their gardens with a greater serenity. Are we so assured of our cherished schemes of progress that we dare decry their more Horatian philosophy? Perpetual revolution and interchange governs the world, there is a wheel of fortune for nations as well as for men, and even on its giddy summit Pope Innocent might cull matter for his discourse concerning the miserable estate of the human race. We feed on the promise of to-morrow; perchance we too must learn, in the words of a champion of the Moderns, 'to submit ourselves herein to the law of Time, which in a few years will make all that for which we now contend, *nothing*'.

AN ESSAY ON ROBERT BURNS[1]

The man who attempts an estimate of Robert Burns must needs be haunted by misgivings when he thinks of the fate of those who have gone before him. It is a hundred and eighteen years since Burns died, and the roll of his critics and biographers includes not a few of the most distinguished names in modern English literature. The success of these critics has not been answerable to their distinction. This quest is not for the cavaliers of literature, the bold and the warlike. Those who have best stood the trial have been helped by their weakness and humility, by a recognition of their own temptations and vanities. Wordsworth understood Burns because he understood the inordinate excitements which beset the poetic temperament. Of *The Idiot Boy* he says, 'I never wrote anything with so much glee'; and, in his search for the spirit of pleasure wherever it can be found, he readily accepts the felicities of love and wine. Carlyle knew poverty—the poverty that weighed on Burns from the cradle to the grave; he knew also, and valued, the matchless sincerity of the man who speaks truly of human errors because he speaks mainly of his own. But those who have put for it gaily and confidently, who have sought a verdict in a happy epigram or a ringing phrase, are not likely to be heard at the ultimate assize. Matthew Arnold, who hated all that is national, brought a charge of provincialism against the poetry of Burns, which deals perpetually, he says, with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners. If he had added, as in fairness he should

[1] Reprinted from W. D. Scott's edition of Lockhart's *Life of Robert Burns*, 1914, vol. i.

have added, that it deals with Scotch love, the fallacy would have been apparent. Robert Louis Stevenson, who had in him, as his friend testifies, ' something of the Shorter Catechist ', never showed it more clearly than when, from a boastful phrase of Burns in a letter to a boon companion, he elaborated his picture of the Old Hawk, the cold-blooded seducer of women. Mr. W. E. Henley wrote an essay on Burns which is a noble piece of English, and a brave counterblast to the Presbyterian apologists, but it is far too simple and clean-cut in its judgments. ' This lewd, amazing peasant of genius,' is what he calls the poet; and though there is some truth in each of the epithets, they do not together make for intimacy and a sympathetic understanding. They are missiles, not discoveries. We are invited to go shares with the critic in his wonder, and in his social and moral censures. But these alien emotions are not what have given Burns his truest friends and disciples. Those who love him best do not wonder at him at all. He seems to them as obvious and natural as breathing. They think and feel what he thinks and feels; but he says more than they are in the habit of saying, and says it brilliantly. He is the voice of a million inarticulate consciences, who, if it were required of them, would cheerfully sign all that he says, and, in so doing, would be signing nothing that they do not understand and believe.

The Scottish people feel a hearty, instinctive, and just dislike for biographers of Burns. The life of Burns, full as it was of joy and generous impulse, full also of error, disappointment, and failure, makes a perfectly devised trap for the superior person. Almost every one is superior to Robert Burns in some one point or other—in conjugal fidelity, in worldly prudence, or in social standing. Let him be careful to forget his advantages before he approaches this

graveside, or his name will be added to the roll of the failures. Every kind of one-sidedness has found its text and its opportunity in the many-faceted records of this life, and in the rich diversity of these poems. The moods of the poet are so whole-hearted and so triumphant, each in its turn, that they seem to give the poet's own warrant to the partiality of his critics and biographers. The judgments which he passed on himself are so frank and unsparing, that they anticipate the moralist and cheer him on to his melancholy work. Does any one desire to preach the danger of the passions, without their glory? he can prove his case from a careful selection of the poet's own words. Does any one desire to exalt the careless life of impulse and whim? the poet again furnishes him with his most eloquent pleading. But let the two parties to the suit read on, and they will both find cause for doubt.

> O ye douce folk that live by rule,
> Grave, tideless-blooded, calm an' cool,
> Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
> How much unlike!
> Your hearts are just a standing pool,
> Your lives, a dyke!

And again, on himself,

> The poor inhabitant below
> Was quick to learn and wise to know,
> And keenly felt the friendly glow,
> And softer flame;
> But thoughtless follies laid him low,
> And stain'd his name!

The poet who wrote these verses knew the delight of riding on the crest of the wave, with a following wind; he knew also the wisdom of those who hug the coast that they may make their harbour.

In the old debate between youth and age, between pleasure and prudence, he was on both sides. But

he did not deceive himself, nor edit the facts in his own defence. He was always 'wise to know'. He knew that the price of life is danger; he knew also that those who bid recklessly for all that life proffers are mortgaging their peace to pay for their raptures. The only just comment on his life is the story of it, if the story could be told truly, with none of the delights omitted. It is a poignant drama, in some sort even a tragedy, but it cannot be handled by the moralist, who, caring nothing for faded and forgotten pleasures, finds the staple of his discourse in the miseries that followed. Yet those faded and forgotten pleasures are the very stuff of that wonderful poetry which raised Burns on high and make him visible to the moralists. For their sake he was killed all the day long.

Because he understands both extremes, Burns is the national poet of Scotland and its people. That fierce and strenuous race has now for many centuries been divided into two irreconcilable parties. There is no gaiety in their religion, and very little sobriety in their pleasures. To this day, in any Scottish town the inhabitants, who have worked together all the week, sort themselves out on the morning of Sunday, and make two parties, the sheep and the goats, each with its appropriate employ. The parties are mutually critical and mutually defiant, so that their differences are hardened by opposition. Innocent pleasures are driven into wild and violent courses, and become disreputable; piety and religion refuse all traffic with human weakness, and become grim and forbidding. If statistics could be compiled, it would probably be found that, in proportion to the number of the population, there are more fanatically righteous, and more dissolute, persons in Scotland than in any other country of Europe.

Burns is the bard of both sects, and is enthusias-

tically accepted by both as their priest and prophet. He wrote *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, which is profound in its intelligence and its piety; he wrote indecent songs for those other Saturday nights which he celebrated in the company of the 'Crochallan Fencibles'—songs of so grotesque and Gargantuan a humour, that they put to shame the lubricity and flatness of uninspired obscenity. He expressed the constancy of settled love in the song written for Jean,

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best;

and he glorified the transports of inconstant love in the song written for Anne Park—'which I think is the best love song I ever composed in my life; but in its original state is not quite a lady's song':

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,
A place where body saw na;
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine
The gowden locks of Anna.

In his *Epistle to Dr. Blacklock* he explained how one ideal may be attained in a fleeting world:

To make a happy fireside clime
To weans and wife,
That 's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life;

and in *The Jolly Beggars* not many years earlier, he wrote with no less fervour of conviction in praise of quite another ideal;

What is title, what is treasure,
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And, at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove ?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love ?

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes ;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have character to lose.

These passages and these sentiments are all the right Burns ; there is no pallor or insincerity in his feeling for the religion of the cottage, and no half-heartedness in his praise of the life of the road. He who picks and chooses may select from Burns a body of verse to please almost any taste ; using it as a text, he may write true and eloquent dissertations on love, on morality, on poetry ; but if he refuses to consider the coarse with the fine, the satirical with the devout, the velleities of sentiment with the stark simplicities of passion, he is not writing of Robert Burns.

It is not the men of letters who have handled Burns with the surest touch. Men to whom letters mean little or nothing are quicker to understand him. The fact is that Burns is everyman. There is no subtlety, and no curiosity, in all his writings. His ditties are in the major key. The feelings which he celebrates are feelings familiar to all, even to those who, in mere self-protection, deny that they feel them. There is no escape from him. He blurts out what every one is thinking, even though most of his hearers are trying not to think it. But all their careful internal discipline is useless, and is even made to appear mean, when their furtive thoughts are dragged into the light, and are invested with the splendour of courageous and absolute expression. Burns has often been praised for his independence of temper. He cannot be over-praised ; born as he was into a society of people struggling for

a livehood, and inured to timidities and suppressions, it was only by his enormous gift of courage and candour that he cut himself loose from these bonds, and rose into the freedom of the truth. His magnanimous recklessness speeded him on his way to death, but it was the same quality of his mind which, in the beginning, had lifted him into the light, and delivered him from slavery. He owed a death to the God of whom music and song and blood are pure; he paid his debt early, but he was no loser by the bargain.

This wonderful instinct for truth and frankness is the secret of his genius and of his style. Perhaps it is the secret of all great style. Most men take no interest in the truth save in relation to their circumstances, their needs, and their aims. When they try to express themselves, they weave a network of accommodations, and entangle themselves in it. Their only blunt, direct, and lucid statements are expressions of the will, not of the understanding. What they see as disinterested spectators does not prompt them to speech. But here and there, at rare intervals, a man is born who must say what he sees, for no other reason than that he sees it; and on him the gift of speech descends. His fellows may think him foolish or incontinent, 'full of new wine'. They suspect the wisdom of one who uses the coinage of language for other purposes than commerce and profit. Ought a man to be trusted with words who does not understand their purchasing power?

The courtiers who praised the emperor's new clothes were shocked by the dreadful candour of the child. 'But he has nothing on'—there is the great style, hidden throughout all time from the calculating and the ambitious, given as their birthright to children and to poets.

No one was ever franker than Burns. Nothing true can be said of him that has not already been said by

himself, somewhere in the six stout volumes of his collected poems and letters.[1] The whole story of his life is there, so that one cannot but marvel at the multiplication of discussions and disquisitions on his character and career. No matter what the point at issue may be, let the advocates have it this way and that, the final and convincing word is to be found in his own writings; and, seeing that the judge's deliverance was spoken before ever the pleadings began, the topsy-turvy case is like to be endless. It is to be remembered that the bulk of the work of Burns, in verse and prose, was published after his death, and that much of it was written without a thought of publication. We have not yet got it all, as the editors' asterisks in the completest collections warn us. Even Auld Scotland, his worshipped love, has not yet dared to insist on her poet being given to her entire. Nevertheless, enough of him is in evidence to show him in every relation of life, and in almost every vein of imagination. If all that he ever wrote were accessible, in good black print, he could hardly be better, or worse, understood.

Frankness is almost always misconceived. Burns was very like many another man in what he had to tell, and differed from other men only because he told it. The poets are discussed as if they were monsters, because they cannot help telling the truth. They are too deeply concerned with the thing that they are, to spend time and effort on that second self, which attends a man like his shadow, the thing that he wishes to be thought. Women, it may be truly said, do not dress themselves; they dress their opinion of themselves, their hopes and aspirations for themselves. Men are no less incurably romantic, and when they speak in their own character, they commonly dress it

[1] *The Works of Robert Burns.* Edinburgh, James Thin, 1895. 6 vols. Ed. Wm. Scott Douglas.

for the effect that they covet. Burns shows traces of this practice, but only in his weaker compositions. When his real feelings take possession of him, he is blown hither and thither, and escapes from his own control. The mark of the secondary character, devised for the impression that it makes on others, is consistency. All built characters are consistent, and, being consistent, are duller and more artificial than real human nature. Character-building, like all other building, is for shelter and for show ; it protects a man from the stress of the weather, and exposes a brave front to the gaze of the world. No such four-square consistency was attainable by Burns. He was the victim and sport of his turbulent passions, which, to use his own words, ' raged like so many devils '. The intensity of his feelings, which responded to all occasions, was too great to allow of a decorous presentation. He is often hot on both sides of a question. A hundred inconsistencies can be gathered from his works. In a song written during his bachelor days at Mossgiel he is pleased to regard himself as a village Don Juan :

O leave novels, ye Mauchline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel ;
Such witching books are baited hooks,
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel ;
Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
They make your youthful fancies reel ;
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

At almost the same time, in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, he pictures innocent youthful love, and breaks out into declamation against those who take advantage of it :

Is there in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch ! a villain ! lost to love and truth !
That can with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth ?
Curse on his perjur'd arts ! dissembling, smooth !

Yet this very vigorous outburst must not be set down as hypocrisy. If the emphasis laid on these dangers in the midst of a scene of domestic happiness seem somewhat extravagant, that too tells its story in connexion with the poet. One of the deepest and most enduring feelings of his life was reverence for his father and affection for the grave and orderly home where he had his upbringing. The memory of that home was his sheet-anchor, and when at last he made good his marriage to Jean Armour, and settled at Ellisland, he acted on principle and conviction. There is nothing very remarkable in the discovery that he talked another and more boastful language among the bachelors of Tarbolton and the companions of his festive hours in Mauchline and Edinburgh.

No sermon worth so much as a tallow dip has ever been preached on the life of Burns, but the mere story of his life is an enthralling drama, so painful, in spite of its scenes of joy and exultation, that the sadness of it tugs at the heartstrings, and it can hardly be read without tears. His long, arduous, over-tasked boyhood and youth were spent on the poor farms of Mount Oliphant and Lochlea, where he worked from sunrise to sunset like a galley-slave. Yet all the time the spirit of youth, which is the strongest thing in the world, kept holiday in his heart, and his pride was more than a match for his poverty. Life called to him, and he listened; he joined himself to companions with whom he discussed the chief problems of life, seriously and high-mindedly, like a conclave of gods, on whose choice the fortunes of the world are to depend; he fell in love with the girls who worked by his side in the fields, and his heart 'was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other'; he read such books as he could lay his hands on, especially poetry, and expressed himself on these and other matters with such spirit and force that he soon became the leader

of his circle and a lawgiver among his mates ; he wrote verses of his own, and read them to his friends—love songs, satires, epistles, and epigrams ; he made a position for himself in his own world, and began to dream of fame and the freedom that lay beyond. The whole of the early life of Burns is one triumphant progress, achieved by a youth who was tied to labour and fatigue, yet denied himself none of those indulgences and excitements of the heart and mind which are sought for by men in easier circumstances. He worked double shifts. He made his living, and he did not sacrifice his life to it. Flood-tide came during the wonderful years at Mossgiel. William Burns, the father, died in 1784, when Robert was twenty-five years old ; thereupon the poet and his brother Gilbert moved from Lochlea, and became joint-tenants of the farm of Mossgiel, which, like Lochlea, is in close neighbourhood to the town of Mauchline. They worked the farm themselves, and Robert lived on a wage of seven pounds a year, which was his share of the takings. But before he had been a year at Mossgiel he was, in more than one sense, a public character. In the autumn of 1784 he was rebuked and fined by the Kirk Session, the occasion being the birth of his illegitimate daughter by Elizabeth Paton, who was formerly in his father's employ at Lochlea. During the following winter his name became known throughout the country-side for his satires on the orthodox, or Auld Licht, party in the Church of Scotland, and his ridicule of theological controversy. In poems like *The Twa Herds*, written on a quarrel between two divines, and *Holy Willie's Prayer*, a magnificent piece of clean-drawn satire on religious hypocrisy, he attains to his full power. The sword of a master of legions never intervened with more decisive effect among the brawls of priests. The trenchant and shining good sense and good nature of

these poems cut to pieces the web of theological sophistications. There is no doubt that by this time Burns was looking beyond his farm. In his affectionate poem of *Welcome to his Love-begotten Daughter*, he says as much when he remarks of the gossips who 'tease his name':

> The mair they talk, I'm kent the better,
> E'en let them clash;

and it was not long before his scheme of publishing a volume of poems began to take shape. In the meantime he was involved with Jean Armour, the daughter of a Mauchline mason, and, having given her a writing which acknowledged her as his wife, prepared to emigrate to Jamaica in order to provide a home for her. Jean's father regarded the proposed marriage of his daughter to Burns as a sheer disaster, and having persuaded Jean to give up the compromising document, cut out the names. Burns was wild with anger; he excommunicated Jean from his heart, and took up, seriously enough, with the Mary of his famous elegies. He continued his preparations for exile, and, as a parting legacy to his friends and enemies, prepared and published the Kilmarnock edition of his *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, 1786. The success of this volume was never in doubt; all the six hundred copies were sold in a month, and they brought to the poet letters of admiration and gratitude from distinguished and learned strangers. He enjoyed his fame, and hesitated for months on the brink of exile. At last, partly on the advice of friends, and partly in obedience to his own ambition, he resolved to try his fortunes, and the fortunes of a new edition of his poems, in the Scottish capital. He arrived in Edinburgh on the 28th of November 1786, and became the lion of the season.

The visit to Edinburgh was the turning-point of

Burns's career. If his life were to be exhibited as a battle between good and evil forces, this blaze of success would be found to be the devil of the piece. The contrast between what went before and what came after, stated carefully, with no moral heightening, is almost melodramatic in its completeness. The eight years of his manhood which passed before he set foot in Edinburgh were the victorious years, reckoned almost exactly from the age of twenty to the age of twenty-eight. Undaunted by difficulties, and unsubdued by hard labour, he steadily climbed, during these years, the steep ascent to the pinnacle of his fame. A placid happiness was impossible to his temperament; he had to do battle with many obstacles, and knew remorse, misery, and anguish of mind. But he came through them all undamaged; even the agitations and reverses of his several love-affairs had not impeded his progress. 'To dear, deluding woman, the joy of joys,' says the Reverend Hamilton Paul, 'Burns was partial in the extreme.' This partiality gave him many hard problems to solve; it led him into many entanglements and some disgrace; but, in these early years at least, it did not defeat him. His spirit was equal to anything; the very fabric of his poetic achievement was woven out of his trials and distresses. Then followed the two winters in Edinburgh, the tours to the Border country and the Highlands, the visits to families of established fortune and position, the honours and excitement of literary society in the capital, not to speak of a whole new chapter of timid sentimental advances to ladies of gentle birth. 'Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall.' And all the time one settled element of unhappiness cast a blight on these enjoyments and adventures—the future held out to Burns no prospect of a sufficient livelihood, and the anxiety gnawed his mind. At last, after much searching of heart and long debate, he fell back on

an idea which he had entertained before the visit to Edinburgh, and determined to seek a post in the Excise. But he put it off for a time in favour of one more attempt at farming, and took a lease of the farm of Ellisland, near Dumfries. He left Edinburgh in March 1788, and after openly announcing his marriage to Jean, settled with her on his farm. Henceforth, for the remaining eight years of his life, his story is a heart-rending story of struggle, depression, and collapse; brightened, it is true, not seldom, by gleams of the old splendour, and preserved from degradation by that temper of humanity which never failed him in all his troubles. He began his experiment without much hope. Before he had been three days on his farm, he wrote in his journal: 'I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's *Adam*, gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace. But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream.' He struggled with his farm for three and a half years, and attempted to maintain himself on it by adding to his work the travelling duties of an Excise officer. Then he gave up the profitless farm, and became an exciseman in Dumfries, at a salary of £70 a year. His heart was not in this business, any more than it had been in the farming. During all these later years he wrote songs, first for *The Scots Musical Museum*, and then for the *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*, which were both produced by Edinburgh publishers. He hated the paltry duties of his profession, and he did not always resist its temptations when it put within his reach the means of drowning his cares. He had friends among the neighbouring gentry, but his pride and his misery made him wilful and reckless, and he offended them; as he also offended his Government employers by flaunting republican and Jacobite opinions. He knew that he was a chief among men,

so that when he lost touch with decorous and reputable people, he was not unwilling to fall back on a lower and less exacting kind of company, where he could indulge himself, and play the Sultan. It was a virtue in him that he was always at home among beggar-bodies and wastrels and crazy drunken folk. The elements of humanity were no puzzle to him ; but the unspoken conventions and rules of what is called good society often wakened the rebellious spirit in him, or, what is worse, made him feel that he was a foreigner, and robbed him of the confidence and sureness of his speech and writing. Some of his letters to ladies can only be called insincere and affected in manner. He knows what he wants to say, but he is mesmerized by the strangeness of his situation, and the glamour of his correspondent, so that he falls into the worst vices of the Complete Letter-writer. But these stilted letters belong, for the most part, to the Edinburgh period, when he first made acquaintance with genteel society. At Dumfries that dream had vanished, and his pride took refuge in defiance. A thick cloud hangs about his last years ; little is heard of him except what can be gathered from the reverberated and distorted gossip of a small provincial town. There is no need to follow conscientious and painful investigators in their minute discussion of the probable causes for the break-up of his health, or the degree of his intemperance, or such-like problems ; the main facts are clear to all who desire to know them. God, who made Robert Burns, made a world that broke him, and there is no more to be said. That marvellous full dark eye, which literally *glowed*, says Sir Walter Scott, when he spoke with feeling or interest ; that high heart, which scorned patronage and authority, but stooped at once to tenderness ; that quick brain, magnificent in its sanity, which surveyed nature and man ; those surging passions and desires, which overleapt all

restraint, and drove straight on the rocks—these were the equipment of a man who was never designed to reach old age. No human imagination can, by any gymnastic, conceive of Burns as a man of sixty. To reach that age a man must spare himself, and conform. Burns did neither. So he retired to his bitter independence in Dumfries, where he fretted his heart out in neglect and obscurity. He died at his house, in the Wee Vennel, on the 21st of July 1796, and was buried with military honours, in the parish churchyard, amid a great concourse of spectators. He could not benefit by it, or know it, but he had devoted friends in every shire of Scotland.

If facts can show anything, they show that the visit to Edinburgh, and the new way of life which he tasted as a stranger there, took the heart out of Burns, and spoilt him for a return to the old familiar track. He is Scotland's greatest poet, yet if all that he wrote were lost except the great things that belong to a single period, of about fifteen months, at Mossgiel, we should still have the bulk of his finest work. Before the Edinburgh visit, he was a ploughman who joyed in literature; after it, he was an author tied to the tail of the plough, or condemned to search old wives' barrels for evidences of deceit. It was his own pride and his own good sense which took him back to the country and the life that he knew. He had a just and discerning horror of putting his poetry to sale for the means of livelihood. He saw well enough that the trade of a man of letters in the roystering Athens of the North promised no peace and no security to a temper like his own, that his hectic enjoyment of it could have no continuance, and that the tide of popular favour which had lifted him so high was bound, in the course of nature, to ebb and leave him stranded. He was wise and cool in his judgment; his head was never turned by the adulation, and the toasts, and the

shouting; he deliberately chose to bid farewell to the world before the world should bid farewell to him. It was a decision worthy of him, but perhaps, accustomed as he was to trust to his own right arm for fighting through, he did not reckon how sore the wrench would be, and he over-estimated his strength. The long trial of patience and endurance to which he doomed himself was not a trial for which he was fit. He had lived on hope and ambition, eagerly pressing on from victory to victory; he could not console himself with the pleasures of memory in the quiet. He had been shown the kingdoms of the world from a lofty mountain, and the thought of that glittering vision disturbed his rest. It was high noon with him at Edinburgh; thenceforward he walked with his own lengthening shadow pointing the way, and with no goal before him but the nightfall.

It is true that at Ellisland and Dumfries he wrote not a few of his finest songs, and that *Tam o' Shanter*, in many ways the strongest and maturest of all his works, belongs to his closing years. He always enjoyed poetry, as only a poet enjoys it, and to read the songs contributed, in rapid succession, to Johnson's *Museum* and to Thomson's *Select Collection*, is to share in a revelry of delight. His style continues to be what it always was, a clean straight miracle, but his humour strengthens, and his versatility increases. He ranges through all moods and all sentiments, from the beauty of 'O my luve is like a red, red rose' to the hilarious fancy of 'O, Willie brewed a peck o' maut'. In *Tam o' Shanter*, especially, he surpasses himself; no masterpiece of narrative so concise, so various, so telling, is to be found even in Chaucer. Is it not a strange thing that the king of poetic story-tellers told only one story? His powers were not failing; but the motive for exercising them was gone. His life was out of gear, and it was only by fits and starts that he showed what

a power and what a craft were standing idle. He was weary of it all.

The core of the tragedy is to be found not in literature, but in society—in those social relationships which, throughout his life, preoccupied and irritated and fascinated the poet. Through his letters and his poems, through all the incidents, happy and unhappy, which were his exalting and his undoing, this eternal refrain goes sounding on. Love, where women of his own class were concerned, and bacchanalian festivity in the free-and-easy circle of boon-companions, were his only complete holiday from the obsession. There, among the elements, he found truth and nature, intimacy and spontaneity. Elsewhere he was eternally on his guard, and prepared for hostilities. Of all his biographers Lockhart, who had no doubt gained much from discussing the life of Burns with Scott, recognizes this most fully. But no one can read the original records without being struck by it. Gilbert Burns, who knew his brother well, speaking of his very early days, says: 'He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life.' To say that his jealousy tortured him all his life is to say no more than he often said himself. Here is an extract from his private Common-place Book, written in Edinburgh:

'There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his heart glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due*; he meets at a great man's table a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely

have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty!

'The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! Though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am as capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.'

This note recurs again and again. Writing to Mrs. Dunlop, after a short visit to Edinburgh from Ellisland, he describes with disgust the bustle and self-sufficiency of the place:

'When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?'

When he complains, as he often does, of the tyranny of riches, and the inequality of fortune, it is his own case that he sketches again. To Peter Hill, an Edinburgh bookseller, he writes enclosing payment of an account:

'Poverty! thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits? . . . By thee, the man of Genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow Greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause.'

All this may be thought to be very sad, but it has its place, and no insignificant place, in the life-history

of Burns. His feelings ran in this channel so habitually and so deeply, that he has marred some passages even of his famous lyric, 'A man 's a man for a' that', by outbursts of injured violence. Why should silk and wine be made the mark, not of the rich, but of knaves and fools? There are knaves in buckram, and fools who drink beer—some even, if the truth must be told, who drink water. That a lord may be a block-head is true, but to lay such stress upon the possibility is not to show indifference to rank. The boast 'We dare be poor' has a touch of the false glory of Charles Kingsley's famous admonition, 'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever'. Those who will to be clever, when they cannot attain it, or dare to be poor, when they cannot avoid it, do not alter the fact, which is not made less distressing by noise about it.

Sometimes the bard's preoccupation with the mysterious distribution of rank and fortune takes a pleasanter form. In a delightful little extempore poem, he celebrates his first meeting with a lord. The occasion was the 23rd of October 1786, and the lord was Lord Daer, eldest son of the Earl of Selkirk, who was fellow-guest with Burns at the house of Dr. Mackenzie of Mauchline. The poet explains that he has been well accustomed to take his ease in the company of men of various professions:

I've been at drucken writers' feasts,
Nay, been bitch-fou mang godly priests—
Wi' rev'rence be it spoken!—
I've even join'd the honor'd jorum,
When mighty Squireships of the quorum
Their hydra drouth did sloken.

But wi' a Lord!—stand out my shin,
A Lord—a Peer—an Earl's son!
Up higher yet, my bonnet!
An' sic a Lord!—lang Scotch ells twa,
Our Peerage he o'erlooks them a',
As I look o'er my sonnet.

But O for Hogarth's magic pow'r!
To show Sir Bardie's willyart glow'r,
An' how he star'd an' stammer'd,
When, goavin', as if led wi' branks,
An' stumpin on his ploughman shanks,
He in the parlour hammer'd.

I, sidling, shelter'd in a nook,
An' at his Lordship steal't a look,
Like some portentous omen;
Except good sense and social glee
An' (what surpris'd me) modesty,
I markéd nought uncommon.

This is very simple and innocent, and its honesty and dramatic humour are no less remarkable. The poet plainly expected to meet the wicked earl of the stage, haughty, sneering, and magnificent in gesture. But he takes keen delight in describing his own embarrassment, and he winds up his poem with a hearty tribute to the 'noble youthful Daer'.

With ladies of quality he was not always so happy. Every one knows the history of his poem on 'The Lass o' Ballochmyle'. He was walking on the banks of Ayr at Ballochmyle, near Kilmarnock, in July 1786, when Miss Alexander, the sister of the proprietor of the estate, crossed his path, a vision of beauty. He celebrated her beauty in a copy of verses, which describe, with his usual frankness, the amorous raptures that might have been his had she been born a country maid and dedicated to his arms. He sent the poem to her, later in the year, and asked for her permission to publish it. No one who reads his letter can wonder that it remained unanswered. But the poet was hurt and angry. He transcribed the letter into his own private letter-book, and added an indignant comment: 'Well, Mr. Burns, and *did* the lady give you the desired permission? No! She was too fine a lady to notice so plain a compliment'—and he goes on to cast contempt on her brothers, whose purses,

he says, are full, but their heads empty. His style in addressing young ladies may be illustrated from the letter written to Miss Peggy Kennedy, whose acquaintance he had made at the house of his friend, Gavin Hamilton :

'Poets, Madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY ; as, if they are really POETS of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate, than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of SPRING, or the pensive mildness of AUTUMN, the grandeur of SUMMER, or the hoary majesty of WINTER, the poet feels a charm unknown to the most of his species : even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman (by far the finest part of God's works below), have sensations for the poetic heart that the HERD of men are strangers to. On this last account, Madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr. Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure ; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.'

This letter was written in the autumn of 1785, at a time when Burns was pouring forth his finest poetry. Some people who write easy, natural, sincere letters, are frozen into sentiment and convention when they attempt a poem or an essay. It was otherwise with Burns ; he wrote poetry like an angel, but when he sat down to address a fair stranger, the disease of social diffidence played lamentable tricks with his pen. Frank humour and passion were here out of place ; he was concerned chiefly to make good his title to social consideration, and he wrote what need not be described now that it has been quoted.

These things have usually been but slightly treated by the biographers, whose love and reverence for Burns make the whole topic distasteful to them. But these things were a very real part of the poet's life, and contributed not a little to the chagrins and unhappinesses which gathered around him. More-

over, if they are silently passed over by the friends of Burns, that very silence puts them as weapons of offence into the hands of some who are not quite so much his friends.

Let there be no mistake about it, this is not a simple or easy question. If it were only to admit a fault, a weakness, in an otherwise strong character, a disadvantage incident to early deprivations, then the business might be dealt with and dismissed in a few words. But Burns is right; men cannot be judged by their social standing; a lord is often a blockhead, a ploughman often shows unerring tact and perfect sincerity in the ordering of his relations with his fellowmen. No rough-and-ready explanation will serve. We have to do with the tragedy of a broken life, and there is no tragedy except where great, unknown forces clash, and the right is on both sides. A pretentious and foolish man, who commences poet, and then complains that he is not sufficiently esteemed, may be set down easily enough, without compunction. But Burns was neither pretentious nor foolish—and he was Robert Burns. To give away his case by genially admitting the charges which he has made it so easy to bring against him is simply not to understand. Any one can name his faults; but the faults of a man like Burns have an awkward habit of being also his virtues. Change the scene, unroll the panorama of his life, and the orthodox standards are made ridiculous; his strength becomes weakness, and his weakness strength.

Burns was a very simple man, very direct and forthright, and quite amazingly honest. In all that he knew and understood—that is to say, in all elemental things—his instinct for truth was as sure as a rock, and as quick as lightning. He was often urged, by influential advisers, to write poems in the English of his day, and so to commend himself to a wider world,

and claim a place beside Goldsmith and Gray and Collins. He always rejected the proposal decisively, with scant ceremony. He knew where his strength lay. The brain of man may easily be made polyglot, but the heart can speak only the birth-tongue. Yet, seeing that Burns wrote English better than most of the poets of Dodsley's Miscellany, and seeing that his choice of the Scottish dialect shut him out, by the common consent of polite opinion in that age, from the high places of literature, it is not a little thing that he never was allured or deceived by false fires. In matters like this his judgment was absolute. So it was in all questions of right and wrong, good and bad, which were familiar to him in his own world and his own society—questions within the competence of unsophisticated humanity. He hated hypocrisy—so did Henry Fielding. He was tender to the transgressions of youthful blood—so was Samuel Johnson—but he was no more willing than was Johnson himself to let these transgressions cast a slight upon the moral law, or justify themselves to the conscience. His writings have given to Scotland a moral concordance of precepts—all sound and true, if they be rightly understood. When he says :

> The heart 's ay
> The part ay
> That makes us right or wrang,

he may seem to be condoning laxity ; he is really saying no more than has been said by all great religious teachers in every age. While he moved in the world of great simple things, where poetry has its habitation, he was at home, and never erred. Then he was suddenly confronted with urgent problems and baffling complexities in an unfamiliar world, not so easy to handle, and he lost his sureness of touch.

Consider the irony of his position in Edinburgh.

He was received, and fêted, and was made free of the tables and homes of the great. They took pleasure in his poetry, and in his wit, and, so far from crudely patronizing him, were, for the most part, delicate and diffident in their approaches, and not in the least oblivious of the points where he was their superior. They had riches and power; he had genius; a perfectly natural courtesy prompted them to treat him on that footing of equality which is the only possible ground for happy social intercourse. Yet there was no equality, and Burns knew it. He was afloat on a treacherous sea; the company that admired him stood on the land, and drank his health, while he raised his glass and bowed his acknowledgements from his frail raft. They went home to the employments and avocations of a settled life; he was left alone, to resume the interrupted agony of his unsettled meditations. It had been a pleasant meeting, enjoyed by all concerned, but Burns knew who paid most for it. His entertainers gave him some of their leisure; he gave them some of his life. The transaction was a kindly one, fairly intended, and courteously carried out, but not equal on the two sides, any more than four acres are equal to four o'clock.

In the reign of Queen Victoria there flourished a long-haired tribe of elegant parasites, who preached to an attentive audience that wealth and social power are matters of no concern to a poet. Burns, though he was subject to some follies, was not that kind of fool. He knew the hardships of life too well to undervalue the means of life. He knew that poverty spells starvation of mind and body; that want is the murderer of wit. It irritated him to see men affluent in power and money, yet endowed with so little imagination that they could not conceive of themselves without these advantages. If he had been a minstrel, a happy-go-lucky child of fortune, he might perhaps

have taken it all in good part, the rough with the smooth, the day of feasting with the month of fasting, the caresses with the neglect, and have enjoyed it quietly, as one of the queer humours of life. But he could not stand aloof in that fashion; the strength and passion of his poetry came from his intimacy with human society as he knew it. He was a man like other men, and he resented the isolation that was put upon him even by honours and plaudits. He suspected that he was being kept at arm's length and regarded as a curiosity. Here were men to whom he must not speak his mind, and women whom he must not love. He felt the invisible bars, and he raged behind them. In truth, though he often chose to regard himself as the Poet, there was much about him of the pride of the aristocrat. He belonged to an old, farming aristocracy, richly dowered with self-respect, attached to the soil, severe in its standards, and fixed in its habits. He could not and would not think of himself as depending on the favour of any living man. Yet here he was, an idolized public musician, going from feast to feast, entertained and entertaining, paying for what he got, but not paying in kind. When he took up with Clarinda, during his second winter in Edinburgh, it is easy to see how he came under that spell. She fell in love with him, like any girl in Ayrshire, and though she kept a strict restraint upon herself, it was for reasons that he allowed and respected, not from a sense of social differences. Here at last was a rest and a welcome for the tired entertainer.

If his social adventures in Edinburgh had left him sore, they had also made it impossible for him to find comfort in the old life. He revisited his people at Mauchline in the summer of 1787, between his two long spells in Edinburgh. He was acclaimed and made much of (for had he not astonished the capital?), but this reflected glory was dust and ashes

to him. He had held converse with quick intelligences and delicate sympathies; he was out of conceit with the heavy talk and blunt questionings of his old acquaintance. Before many days had passed he is found writing to his Edinburgh friend, William Nicol:

'I never, my friend, thought mankind capable of anything very generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, SATAN.'

The parallel is too close; he was warring with the eternal. His pride was immense, and he pitted it against law and ordinance; he wrestled in a network of those innumerable fibres which hold society together, and make it unbreakable. To call the unwritten laws of society by the name of conventions is to give them too poor and weak a name. Their strength, no doubt, depends on a mass of fluctuating opinion; so does the price of Consols. But no man who matched himself against them ever yet came off the victor. Burns did not assail them in open combat; but he nursed the spirit of rebellion in himself, and during all his later years was quick to take occasion for defiance. The power of society is a blind power; without intending it, almost without knowing it, moving on its way in obedience to the laws of its own being, it crushed the life out of the poet. It is made up of little things; small pre-eminences given to wealth, slight presumptions accorded to rank, habitual deferences paid to office. The man whom it will not recognize is the man who claims these little things as a tribute to his personal

merit. No society in the world can afford to admit that claim. It was to escape the turmoil of such claims that society invented its rules.

In a tender mood of retrospection, society has felt qualms and misgivings with regard to the poet. Could not more have been done for him? The question has often been asked, and it is kindly meant; but no satisfactory answer to it has ever been suggested. Burns was not the sort of man to whom it is easy to proffer help; and it may well be doubted whether he could have brought himself to endure the kind of shelving and pensioning which any public subsidy, however honourable, inevitably implies. He was a young man, in the full possession of his faculties, and would have hated 'to rust unburnished, not to shine in use'. Who can picture him happy in a paid sinecure? He would have asserted himself, and broken out, so that the end would have been the same.

Life is so mixed a business, that any simple moral drawn from it is doomed to be onesided. The misery of these last years at Dumfries is real enough, and sad beyond expression. But the horrors and squalors of human suffering are commonly felt much more acutely by lookers-on than by those who undergo the pain. Burns was still himself; he still had hours of escape and happiness. The meanness of these closing scenes was no part of his soul's history; it belongs rather to the history of that crowd of hangers-on, busybodies, and hero-worshippers, who were proud to say that they had made merry in his company. They came about him like flies, and his humanity forbade him to repel them. If Shakespeare were alive to-day, he could not live at Stratford-on-Avon; the vulgarity of the place would be the death of him. Keats, who walked through the Burns country in the summer of 1818, saw the whole thing clearly, as if he were gazing in a crystal.

'We went to Kirk Alloway'—he writes to his friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, '"a Prophet is no Prophet in his own Country"—We went to the Cottage, and took some Whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof—they are so bad I cannot transcribe them—The Man at the Cottage was a great Bore with his Anecdotes—I hate the rascal—his Life consists in fuz, fuzzy, fuzziest—He drinks glasses five for the Quarter and twelve for the hour—he is a mahogany-faced old Jackass who knew Burns—He ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. He calls himself "a curious old Bitch"—but he is a flat old dog—I should like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him. O the flummery of a birth-place! Cant! Cant! Cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache—Many a true word, they say, is spoken in jest—this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity: the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet. My dear Reynolds—I cannot write about scenery and visitings—Fancy is indeed less than a present palpable reality, but it is greater than remembrance—you would lift your eyes from Homer only to see close before you the real Isle of Tenedos—you would rather read Homer afterwards than remember yourself—One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. His Misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill—I tried to forget it—to drink Toddy without any Care—to write a merry sonnet—it won't do—he talked with Bitches—he drank with Blackguards, he was miserable—We can see horribly clear, in the works of such a Man his whole life, as if we were God's spies.'

Any one who visits Dumfries to-day will come away with something of the same impression. There, in the little upstairs room where Burns died, are exhibited, without any ironic intent, his blue china toddy-bowl, and the larger and more decorative toddy-bowl of the earliest Burns Club, founded to carry on the tradition of jollity. In the churchyard, looking over the town, stands his Mausoleum, a small square stone building, with windows like the windows of a living-room, peering through which windows the visitor may discern, in the damp and comfortless interior, a seated statue of the poet.

It is all like a bad dream, but it has nothing to do with Burns. Any one who wants to escape from it can follow the advice of Keats, and remember the songs. Some of the most exquisite among them were written in the last year of his life. He always stooped to his women, his brother Gilbert says; he never stooped more tenderly and reverently than in the lovely song, 'O wert thou in the cauld blast', which he wrote, when he was very near death, for Jessie Lewars, the daughter of a brother-exciseman. She tended him in his illness; he repaid the debt with more than his usual magnificence when, in a strain of the deepest feeling, he pictured himself her protector in the storm, and imagined her his Queen Consort on the throne of the world. The prerogative of man is to despise death; Burns died unsubdued and unafraid.

> Fly, fly, commanding soul;
> And on thy wings, for this thy body's breath,
> Bear the eternal victory of death.

It is a true instinct which refuses to dwell on woes that long since were curtained in peace. Poetry, the voice of all man's truest instincts, has preserved for us nothing of Burns except his pleasures and his triumphs, and these it has made into a gift for all men. The Burns Clubs are right; they meet in all parts of the world where Scottish men find footing, and it is not the sorrows of the poet that they celebrate. The wheel has come round again; the freemasonry that Burns knew so well in his happier days is once more holding festival, there is whisky and good fellowship, the haggis is brought in on its groaning trencher, and the scene is illuminated, as it was when he made one of the company, by the wit and fancy of the Bard. Not all that he wrote is suited for these festive companies, or for these occasions. But all that he wrote is sure to be known by one or another of those who toast his

memory. His searching moral counsels and precepts are also a national tradition. There are few times and seasons when he has nothing to say. But he speaks most readily to those who are at the top of happy hours. Lovers meeting at a tryst, soldiers answering the call to action, friends pledging their faith—all these have found in him their Bible. Because he knew happiness he responds to their need. His life is done with ; the joy that he took in it remains.

WILLIAM BLAKE[1]

We know little of the life of William Blake; and a great part of his written work, jotted down in pencil when the mood was on him, and subject to all the accidents of time and editorial patronage, has come to us only in fragments. Yet what we have reveals him for one of the boldest, most spontaneous, and most consistent of English poets and thinkers. There is no part of his writings, no casual recorded saying, or scribbled note on the margin of the books he read, which is not of a piece with all the rest. An absolute unity of character and purpose runs through all. Put him to the test, and he will re-word the matter, which madness would gambol from. Those who have read his work with the will and the power to learn, are ready to acknowledge him for what he claimed to be, a thinker and poet and seer.

His work is one prolonged vindication of the cause of all the artists in the world, and an apology for all those, whether saints or heretics, to whom religion means something other than a body and system of imposed discipline and law. Blake would have nothing to do with rational system. He trusted his vision absolutely, and believed only what he saw. When he built up the imaginative fabric of the Prophetic Books, his claim for them was that they are not fable nor allegory, but vision; 'an endeavour to restore what the Ancients called the Golden Age'. His motive for the elaborate structure is given in *Jerusalem*:

I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's;
I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.

[1] Introduction to *Lyrical Poems of William Blake*, edited by John Sampson. Oxford, 1905.

What his eye saw was interpreted and supplemented by the fierce energies of his mind, bodying forth 'the forms of things unknown'. So he succeeded in giving a rendering of things which, in its darkness as in its light, is the creature of his own perception and his own imagination.

The most of mankind are so drilled and exercised, from earliest childhood, in codes of interpretation, that when they come to look at the world, and to ask questions of it, they cannot look at it on their own account. They see it by the light of half a dozen preconceived theories. They have learned a thousand glosses by heart before ever they attempt to read the text. So little accustomed are they to trust to their impressions, that even at a crisis they will make haste to escape from their own experience, and take refuge in authority and tradition. Safe enough guides these are, no doubt, for many of the affairs of life; but a poet must find a surer foothold if he is to move the world. He must speak because he has seen and known. 'The reason', says Mr. Walter Bagehot, 'why so few good books are written, is that so few people that can write know anything. In general an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiment of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum.' Mr. Bagehot is speaking of the width of experience that went to the making of Shakespeare, but his words are applicable also to the depth and intensity of experience that gave his message to Blake. Critical readers of poetry, and the poets themselves, have been much concerned with questions of form and expression. Should the thing be said that way or this? The previous question—why should the thing be said at all?—is often more troublesome to answer. Blake

could answer it decisively and triumphantly. He spoke because the truth appeared to him as clear as the sun at noonday, and would not be denied. The excuses and explanations which enable any reader so minded to escape from his vision were of no avail to him. He saw and knew;—no reason or demonstration could make head against that. Unless we find ourselves compelled to adopt one of the nullifying hypotheses which are implicitly accepted by most of his eulogists, the only question for us is whether he has expressed himself clearly and fully enough to enable us to share in his vision. 'Truth', he says himself, 'can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believed.' Are his own utterances intelligible? If he was a charlatan, or the dupe of his own excitable nerves, or a maniac, his work, at the best, is opalescent nonsense. But if he has succeeded, here and there, in raising the curtain on the life of things, it is the part of wisdom and modesty to suppose that the rest of his work, which is dark to us, is not devoid of meaning.

In poetry he stands outside the regular line of succession, and, as he had no disciples, so he acknowledged no masters. 'The man, either painter or philosopher,' he says in his notes on Reynolds, 'who learns or acquires all he knows from others, must be full of contradictions.' Yet he began very early to write verse, and for the youthful poet there is no escape from imitation. Indeed, in another of his incisive notes, he admits the necessity. 'The difference', he says, 'between a bad artist and a good is, that the bad artist *seems* to copy a great deal, the good one *does* copy a great deal.' Certainly, it is strange to observe how the young engraver's apprentice, meditating the muse, during his scanty leisure, in the City lanes round Holborn, while Doctor Johnson gave the law to literary society, found out for himself, as if by instinct, the poets who had most to teach him. His early work,

printed in the *Poetical Sketches* of 1783, is full of memories and fragrances culled from Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Elizabethan song-writers. The lyric, 'My silks and fine array', might almost have been written by an Elizabethan. The celebration of 'good English hospitality' is in the very vein of early popular poetry. And the *Song by an Old Shepherd*, beginning:

> When silver snow decks Sylvia's clothes,
> And jewel hangs at shepherd's nose,

is the work of one fresh from the reading of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It*. By as natural a kinship Blake recognized the imaginative power of Macpherson and Chatterton, whose forgeries were the talk of the day. In such pieces as *Gwin, King of Norway*, and *Fair Elenor* the ballad is revived, with that added sense of dream and magic which was the secret of the later poets of romance:

> My lord was like a star in highest heav'n
> Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness;
> My lord was like the opening eyes of day
> When western winds creep softly o'er the flowers;
>
> But he is darken'd; like the summer's noon
> Clouded; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down;
> The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.
> O Elenor, weak woman, fill'd with woe!

And not less remarkable than his discovery of those poets, old or new, who could speak to him in the language of imagination, is his complete neglect of the fashionable models of his own time. In poetry, as in the other arts, Blake cared only for impulse, spontaneity, primal energy. 'A cistern contains,' he says; 'a fountain overflows'; and he was impatient of all the rules of measure and continence. In another of his proverbs he gives pithy utterance to the indictment which was to be brought by his successors against the verse of the eighteenth century: 'Bring out

number, weight, and measure, in a year of dearth.' The case against the Augustan poets has never been more tersely put. But Blake shows no acquaintance with their works, and might almost be supposed never to have heard the name of Pope, were it not that, in a grotesque and whimsical parody on the style of that poet, he has recorded his contempt for all the wooden furniture of compliment and rhetoric :

> Wondrous the Gods, more wondrous are the Men,
> More wondrous, wondrous still, the Cock and Hen,
> More wondrous still the Table, Stool and Chair ;
> But ah ! more wondrous still the Charming Fair.

He would, no doubt, have been willing to apply to Pope's verses what he said of the drawings of Rubens and Le Brun, ' These things that you call Finish'd are not even Begun, how can they then be Finish'd ? '

What he learned from those who went before him can only be guessed or inferred. We are on surer ground in asserting that he taught nothing to those who came after him. His poems, jotted down in his own note-books, or printed by his own processes in issues that were hardly more accessible than the original manuscript, remained unknown to the public till many years after his death. A few lovers of poetry, Charles Lamb and Wordsworth among the number, when the Romantic Revival was already at its height, made acquaintance with the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and admired them as the work of genius, tainted perhaps with insanity. Yet in these songs and in other unprinted poems Blake had anticipated the Romantic movement in all its phases. The most characteristic doctrines of the diverse sects of that great school are all foreshadowed in stray lines of Blake's verse. Is it the metaphysical idealism of Coleridge's great Ode ? Blake has expressed it in a single crude couplet :

> The Sun's Light, when he unfolds it,
> Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

Is it Wordsworth's praise of the revelations of sense as compared with the processes of the tedious intellect? It appears already in Blake as *The Voice of the Ancient Bard*:

> Youth of delight, come hither,
> And see the opening morn,
> Image of truth new-born.
> Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
> Dark disputes and artful teazing.

Is it the enchantment of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*—the happiness of dream, and the horror of awakening to reality? Blake too had known it:

> Dear Child, I also by pleasant streams,
> Have wander'd all Night in the Land of Dreams;
> But tho' calm and warm the waters wide,
> I could not get to the other side.
>
> 'Father, O father! what do we here
> In this land of unbelief and fear?
> The Land of Dreams is better far,
> Above the light of the Morning Star.'

Is it, finally, the Revolutionary theology of Shelley? It is already fully developed in Blake; the king and the priest are types of the oppressor; humanity is crippled by 'mind-forg'd manacles'; love is enslaved to the moral law, which is broken by the Saviour of mankind; and, even more subtly than by Shelley, life is pictured by Blake as a deceit and a disguise veiling from us the beams of the Eternal. The poetical work of Blake, standing, as it does, out of direct relation to the literary history of his age, shows how vain is the attempt to treat the great movements of the human mind as originating in authors of books, or operating chiefly by way of literary influence. Thought, which in its slower and duller processes is contagious, escapes at times from our control, and lives in the air that we breathe.

Blake's creed came borne to him in no other way. He made it his declared aim 'to cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration', and to express his own vision of the world. A man who dares thus to trust himself cannot but be consistent, for inconsistency lies in inferences and arguments, not in the array of things seen. Blake would not make use of anything borrowed from others. 'He would have none of the existing mythologies,' says his editor, Mr. John Sampson, 'either Greek, or Norse, or Hebrew; but must create or evolve one of his own, expressing his spiritual convictions in a new symbolic language, written in his own new metres, and engraved and illustrated by his own hand in a new process of his own invention.' In the Prophetic Books all the names and phrases are uniformly employed. Euclid would be a very uninforming work to a reader who thought that '"parallel", "radius", "hypothenuse", were merely odd-sounding names with no particular meaning'. Although Mr. Swinburne's essay on Blake has furnished some hints and glimpses towards the understanding of the Prophetic Books, the task of interpretation still remains to be achieved. Whether Blake's whole scheme will ever be fully expounded is at best doubtful, but this much is clear, that no interpreter who regards it as a series of whimsical, unrelated and fitful utterances dare hope for success. 'God keep you and me', Blake writes to a friend, 'from the divinity of yes and no too—the yea, nay, creeping Jesus—from supposing up and down to be the same thing, as all experimentalists must suppose.' He was wholly in earnest, felt no doubt as to the value of his message, and passed his life in the attempt to express it. Its very clearness to himself was a danger. He lived so long aloof from the ordinary traffic of human intelligence, that he came to write only for himself, and to employ terms in so arbitrary a signi-

ficance, that his Prophetic Books are like an elaborate cipher, which can be unriddled only by the correspondences of its several parts. And the difficulty of a solution is much increased by the novelty of the meaning when once the meaning is attained. No domestic and familiar truths await the explorer in these labyrinths, rather the strange glow of the furnace at the heart of things, where the rocks are melted and the stuff of the enduring hills is prepared for its life on the surface of the earth.

Until some interpreter shall penetrate to these recesses it is impossible to criticize Blake's scheme from within. Los, Enitharmon, Rintrah, Theotormon, and other daily companions of his thought, to our apprehension are vague and overwhelming and intangible, 'scarce images of life', stretched on the deep, like clouds. The regions inhabited by these Titanic creations oppress us with a sense of fear and homelessness. Now and again the reader catches hold of a clue, only to lose it again. The two souls of man, called by Blake his 'Spectre' and his 'Emanation', the principle, that is to say, of reason, pride, and self-assertion, conceived of as a male, and that other principle of impulse, passion, and imagination which appeared to Blake in the likeness of a beautiful woman—who will not admit that this new psychology takes account of the facts of experience? But the symbolism is strange and difficult; moreover, when we have accepted it, we find that it only leads us onward into deeper and darker matters. The terror of being left alone in a world of strange shapes takes possession of us, and we are glad to give our guide the slip and return to the light of common day. The most of Blake's readers, and some even of his lovers, are content to leave the Prophetic Books unstudied, and to make what they can of the lyrical and occasional poems.

Here, too, there is difficulty enough, but we are

nearer to the speech of every day. From the first all Blake's writing has the elemental character of great poetry. It is not the adventures of the elect, but what happens everywhere and always, that the poets declare to us. Those writers whose imagination is not strong and true will always try to make play with the exceptional or unexampled; but it is not thus that the Gods reveal themselves. Poetry is not a game of boasting; and the poet brings us back from our pathetic little vanities to confront us once more with the unchanging facts—lest we forget. His touch is as rare as truth. There are war-songs in plenty, pitched in a key of noisy self-glorification: 'We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.' How solemn and real Blake's *War Song to Englishmen*, written in early youth, sounds by the side of this heroic claptrap—all because his imagination is at work, and he sees the facts:

> Prepare your hearts for Death's cold hand! prepare
> Your souls for flight, your bodies for the earth;
> Prepare your arms for glorious victory!
> Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God!
> Prepare, prepare.

There is no alloy of rhetoric in Blake's poetry. He lives among the elements, and is akin to them, and discerns them so clearly in all life and experience, that he has no patience with the doubtful processes of reasoning. For the blind he has no message:

> He 's a Blockhead who wants a proof of what he can't Perceive;
> And he 's a fool who tries to make such a Blockhead believe.

As for those who see and are not satisfied with seeing, but must needs have further proof, their case is no better:

> He who Doubts from what he sees
> Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please,
> If the Sun and Moon should Doubt
> They'd immediately Go Out.

His own faith was so simple and fervid that he could not give utterance to it save in the language of vision. The question as to what Blake saw and what he imagined he saw has much exercised his commentators. Doubtless he was gifted with the easily excited visual imagination of a painter. But the truth is that he would have found no interest and no meaning in the discussion. All that he believed seemed to come to him directly, like the light of the sun, and he could not bear to have his perceptions questioned by those who had not seen. His commentators, with their large allowance for his genius, and their willingness to admit that there may be much in what he says, would have enraged him. He would have all or nothing ; and even his admirers are not willing to face the consequences of giving him all. Mr. Gilchrist can find ' no leaven of real sense or acumen ' in Blake's marginal notes on Bacon's *Essays*. ' Whatever Bacon may say,' remarks the plaintive biographer, ' his singular annotator refuses to be pleased.' Scattered down the margin of the book, we are told, are Blake's explosive comments— ' " liar ", " villain ", " atheist ", nay, " Satan ", and even (most singular of all) " stupid ".' The sentimental enthusiast, who worships all great men indifferently, finds himself in a distressful position when his Gods fall out among themselves. His case is not much unlike that of Terah, the father of Abraham, who (if the legend be true) was a dealer in idols among the Chaldees, and, coming home to his shop one day, after a brief absence, found that the idols had quarrelled, and the biggest of them had smashed the rest to atoms. Blake is a dangerous idol for any man to keep in his shop. He is not to be pacified by the fluttering good offices of his owner. ' Here,' pleads Mr. Gilchrist, after quoting a few of the marginal notes on Bacon, ' here let this singular dialogue at cross-purposes end.' To whom Blake—' This is cer-

tain: if what Bacon says is true, what Christ says is false.' The answer to this last direct thrust is still to seek.

One theme preoccupies Blake in all his writings, and reappears in many forms—the theme to which he gave a name in the title of his book, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.* To reconcile the surprising and grave lessons of experience with those joyous revelations which come to eyes newly opened upon the world was his single problem, as it is the problem of all poets. The life-giving rays of the sun, which awakened the child to ecstasy, are found to parch and burn as the day moves on to its noon. Is there no light without heat; no joy, however natural and innocent, without its price exacted in pain? The trouble of the question comes to all, and cautious tempers forswear the delights offered to them, or enjoy them furtively and sparingly, from dread of a jealous God. The burnt child learns all too soon to shun the light. Doubt, misgiving, and fear assume control over the mind, and memory utters the final verdict:

> Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
> And your winter and night in disguise.

It is the distinction of Blake, even among the poets, that the freshness of his early joys was never for an instant dulled or clouded by the inevitable ills of life. Experience and innocence are contrary states, but neither of them is of force to change the nature of the other. That profanity which is called disillusionment is impossible to a soul that has tasted joy in all its purity and fullness. 'The man', said Blake, 'who has never in his mind and thought travelled to heaven is no artist.' He had lived for long years in heaven; and nothing taught him by experience could cause him to renounce his faith, or to treat it as a bygone happy illusion. He needed not the comfort that comes of

children, for he never lost the simplicity and intensity of the child's mind that was in him. There is nothing in all poetry like the *Songs of Innocence*. Other writers —Hans Andersen, for instance—have penetrated into that enchanted country, have learned snatches of its language, and have seen some of its sights. But they are at best still foreigners, observers, emissaries; the golden treasures of innocence which they bring back with them they coin into pathos and humour for the use of their own countrymen. There is no pathos in Blake's innocent world; he is a native of the place, and none of the natives sits aloof to compare and ponder. There is no humour; the only laughter heard in that Paradise is the laughter of woods, and streams, and grasshoppers, and the sweet round mouths of human children. There the day is a festival of unceasing wonders, and the night is like the sheltering hand of God. There change is another name for delight, and the parting of friends is a prelude to new glories:

> Farewell, green fields and happy groves
> Where flocks have took delight.
> Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
> The feet of angels bright;
> Unseen they pour blessing,
> And joy without ceasing,
> On each bud and blossom,
> And each sleeping bosom.

Death itself is an enterprise of high hope, an introduction to the Angel with the bright key who opens the long row of black coffins. Sorrow there is, and pity for sorrow; tears and bewilderment and darkness; but these things are all within the scheme, and do not open vistas into chaos. When the little boy is lost, God himself, dressed in white, appears by his side and leads him back to his weeping mother, to the world of daylight and shepherds, and lions with golden

manes. One who has known this holy land, and has lived in it until it was overrun by infidel invaders—how should not his later life be a great crusade for its recovery ?—

> Bring me my Bow of burning gold !
> Bring me my Arrows of desire !
> Bring me my Spear ! O clouds, unfold !
> Bring me my Chariot of fire !
>
> I will not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant Land.

To a temper thus ardent and direct and sincere, doubt is impossible. The question 'What shall we believe ?' continues to exercise the world, because most dwellers in the world neglect the wonders of sense and imagination, daily presented to them, or count appearances trivial and deceitful, and look aside from them into vacancy for a phantom cause. Like the three Philosophers who figure in *An Island in the Moon*, these inquirers 'sit together thinking of nothing'. But to Blake, in the first flush of his manhood, the world, as it is given to us, was a thing 'bewildering hope, outrunning praise', exhausting all the capabilities of faith. What unknown world could possibly satisfy the man who finds no grounds for faith in this world of the fields and the skies ? The auguries of Innocence are more confident :

> Joy and Woe are woven fine,
> A Clothing for the Soul divine ;
> Under every grief and pine
> Runs a joy with silken twine.
> It is right it should be so ;
> Man was made for Joy and Woe ;
> And, when this we rightly know,
> Thro' the World we safely go.

The birth-speech of faith is the lyric. The purest

lyrical utterances do not depend for their beauty on the arrangement of accents and the counting of syllables; translate them into any language, and they still run straight into song. There is no version of the Magnificat which does not rise lifted on a climbing sea of melody; it is the voice of the faith of all the women in the world. 'For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden'—what treatise on metre can explain that rapture of song? The spontaneity of whole-hearted joy will save it from all essential faults of expression; its only business is to flow, and it has no choice but to take the easiest outlet. Blake troubles himself not at all about metres; even in a professed imitation of Spenser he does not once succeed in hitting Spenser's stanza; but the life and soul of lyrical effect is assured to him by his very carelessness. It seems that he sang his own lyrics to tunes of his own choice, and shaped them by that loose prosody which music supplies. Further than this he acknowledged no law. All good things, in art as in life, were to him the gift of the Spirit, and the impulse that began a poem must end it, or the poem must remain unfinished. The American critic who maintained that there can be no such thing as a long poem might have found his happiest illustration in the works of Blake. Some of the poems, it is true, number a good many lines, yet do not fall into the flats of prose demonstration; but these are hardly ever single in effect; they come to a natural close in a few stanzas, and the prophetic fury is renewed in a fresh outburst. The dutiful and laborious execution of a long task originally conceived in a happy moment of insight, was impossible to Blake. To continue working when the fever-fit was overblown would have been to work without conviction and possibly without meaning.

His name has, therefore, been made the text for many discourses on the nature of genius and inspira-

tion. To hear this subject discussed in ordinary societies of men one would think that the human race is a nation of slaves and idolaters. Every kind of tribute is offered to the unhappy man of genius, save the sole tribute that is of value to him, the tribute of fellowship, equality, love, and understanding. He is full of the breath and zest of humanity, and is treated as though it were morbid to be inspired. He sees what is around him with a clear eye; he acts from quick native human impulse; and he is awarded a place apart, as a genius, to be reverenced rather than trusted. The gifts with which he is so plentifully dowered, for all that they are looked askance at as abnormal and portentous, are the common stuff of human nature, without which life would flag and cease. No man destitute of genius could live for a day. No intuitive movement of feeling or sudden flash of conviction but is inspired as truly as the prophecy of the seer. Genius is spontaneity, the life of the soul asserting itself triumphantly in the midst of dead things. Inspiration is a short name for all that comes to us immediately, with the warrant of ultimate certainty. The certainty cannot be communicated to others at second-hand. If the man whose inspiration is full and frequent cannot teach us to breathe and to see, he can teach us nothing. We shall lead a sickly life if we try to support ourselves on the spare products of his generous vitality. We must try, and taste, and act for ourselves, on the assurance of our own vision.

These unprompted movements of the human soul, rejoicing in its freedom, and dilating itself against the force of circumstance, give to life the greater part of its meaning and its zest. But these are not enough to carry all human souls through the long campaign of life. The world is vast and complex and unrelenting, and the energies of the soul prove fitful and languid. Some support and shelter is needed for those times

when we are taken at unawares, when our sympathies are not alert, and our vision is clouded, and our power of initiative is paralysed by doubt. At times like these men crutch themselves on 'principles' of action, or seek relief by resting on the strength of an accepted law. Even love gives no unerring light; even joy is not always its own security. The need of others sometimes fails to inspire us; our own experience sometimes fails to transform itself into vital motive. Then we must fall back upon our defences, and do our duty. The mechanism of society and institution and custom cannot be based on the shifting chances of inspiration. Yet all law, even the law that is forced on its reluctant victim by the stronger interests of others, is active in some minds in its primal form of inspiration. The strength of law consists in this, that men are daily carrying out its behests, with no consciousness of compulsion or obedience, from sheer delight in their own discernment and their own power. These are the makers of the law; the others are its captives and slaves. All morality has been invented, and is continually re-invented, and gives to its discoverer a sense of elation like that which the artist finds in the work of his hands. One man's duty is another man's pleasure. What appears to one man as a cold and alien power, to be dreaded and revered, is to another man the living energy that circulates in his veins and flashes in his thought.

Blake trusted so entirely to his instincts, his life was so made up of quick feeling and creative impulse, that Law and Institution, as they exist in the world, seemed to him a dull and evil imposition, maintained by the passions which are hostile to life—fear, and envy, and cunning selfishness. State and Church, King and Priest, were hateful to him, but most of all he hated the slow processes of the inductive reason, or, to give them their accepted name, Science. There is some

danger of confusion here, for Blake often mentions Science, and almost invariably in a strain of the highest eulogy. 'O ye religious, discountenance every one among you who shall pretend to despise Art and Science! I call upon you in the name of Jesus! What is the Life of Man but Art and Science?' By Science, here and elsewhere, he means intuitive knowledge, insight, and imagination at work on the individual objects of man's regard. He means, indeed, what he says in a prose passage of *Jerusalem*: 'I know of no other Christianity, and of no other gospel, than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination.' Over against these energies of the inward light must be set all the methods and results of rational demonstration, which Blake inveighs against by the name of Reason, and Philosophy, and Natural Religion, but which are familiar to-day under the name of Science. 'To generalize', he says curtly, 'is to be an idiot. To particularize is the great distinction of merit.' In this, as in all things, his attitude is consistent and single. General rules for conduct, general truths of observation, general canons of Art, even the vague and general tone and colouring of the great Venetian painters, all these were the same to him—stupid makeshifts for escaping from the only things worth knowing, those Minute Particulars, namely, which are given directly in perception and cannot be reached by a train of inference. His doctrine of Art is his doctrine of Morals; what is care for detail and outline in the one is reverence and imagination in the other:

He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars.
General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer;
For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars,

And not in the generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power,
The Infinite alone resides in Definite and Determinate Identity.

In more homely fashion he illustrates the same conclusion by the fable of the dog who dropped the definite and determinate bone to catch at the vague perfections of its shadow, and so lost shadow and substance too. 'He had them both before', says Blake, in one of those terse and far-reaching sentences which crop up everywhere, even in his idlest rhymes.

This doctrine, in all its bearings, is the soul and centre of Blake's teaching on Art, Religion, Morals, and Politics. He was never tired of inveighing against Reason as the only sin. 'The Classics,' he says, 'it is the Classics, and not the Goths nor Monks, that desolate Europe with Wars.' The same reasoning power which gives laws to literature establishes the tyranny of empire:

The Strongest Poison ever known
Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.

And again, in *Jerusalem*:

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man; and when separated
From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio
Of the Things of Memory, It thence frames Laws and Moralities
To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms and Wars.

The Reasoning Power is an abstract objecting power that negatives everything—a negation of the substance from which it is derived, a murderer of its own body, and of every divine member. Its strength is the strength of a terrible mechanism, its methods are the methods of violence, and its work is the crushing out of all things that have in them the separate germs of life. It is the abomination of desolation.

It would be difficult to find anywhere a more com-

plete and eloquent statement of the creed of Anarchy than is contained in Blake's writings. Those who conceive of that creed as the child of hatred begotten by confused thinking, may here correct their view. Blake is an anarchist because his heart goes out in sympathy to life in all its careless and joyous manifestations, and because he has the courage to hold fast by what he loves. The Angels, as he describes them, are also anarchists, natives of the element, creatures of simple love and impulse. The strange power of a good conscience and of singleness of mind is seen in the freedom and success with which the Angels set law at naught. They may steal a hundred horses, where the man of principle, the man, that is, who is the victim of doubt and moral struggle, may not look over the hedge. Blake never failed to pay his tribute of admiration to the power of innocence, confident in itself, acting on its own sure initiative, and seeking for no support from others. He recognized these impulses of the heart even in the apostles of doubt and negation. Voltaire as the mocker of Christian faith, and the setter-up of the rule of Reason, appears again and again in Blake's writings as the adversary of the Spirit. But Voltaire was also a rebel to established law, and a man of quick and generous impulse. In conversation with Crabb Robinson, Blake described how Voltaire had appeared to him in vision, and had talked with him. 'I blasphemed the Son of Man,' said Voltaire, 'and it shall be forgiven me; but my enemies blasphemed the Holy Ghost in me, and it shall not be forgiven them.' The thoughts and deeds that spring from an inward necessity are the only work of the Spirit. Blake is much more profound in his exposition of these things than Shelley, or any other of the Revolutionary poets. Government he sees as a necessary outcome of the rule of Reason; and he attacks the main position:

I turn my eyes to the Schools and Universities of Europe,
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire
Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: and Works
Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other: not as those in Eden, which
Wheel within Wheel in freedom revolve in harmony and peace.

This dark Satanic mill, the Reasoning power, which overshadows humanity, has woven, for a garment of oppression, the woof and warp of Good and Evil—two contraries, qualities with which every substance is clothed, but which are abstracted from their substances and made into a universal and shadowy pall. On this problem of Good and Evil Blake is always strangely illuminative and searching. What he says, though it does not lightly unriddle that mystery, bears all the marks of clear perception and profound belief. He was fond of talking on this theme to Crabb Robinson, who did not understand him. He would not admit the real existence of Evil; errors there are in the world, no doubt, said he, but these are only negations. 'What are called vices in the natural world are the highest sublimities in the spiritual world.' He was here speaking, it seems likely, not of negations, errors of timidity and weakness, but of the great positive deeds of passion and rebellion. Of the natural world 'It is all nothing', he would say, 'and Satan's empire is the empire of nothing'. On one occasion Crabb Robinson ventured to remark that if the distinction between good and evil is of no importance, there is no use in education. Blake replied, 'There *is* no use in education. I hold it to be wrong. It is the great sin. It is eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the fault of Plato. He knew of nothing but the virtues and vices, and good and evil. There is nothing in all that.

Everything is good in God's eyes.' Crabb Robinson, pursuing his objection, asked if there is then nothing evil in what men do; and Blake replied, 'I am no judge of that. Perhaps not in God's eyes.' This Crabb Robinson finds to be inconsistent with what Blake said in a subsequent conversation, when the purity of Dante's character was under discussion: 'Pure, do you think there is any purity in God's eyes? The angels in heaven are no more so than we. "He chargeth his angels with folly."' But so far from being inconsistent, the two statements are mutually dependent. Blake could not bear to have the moral judgments of men authorized by being attributed to the Eternal. 'Who shall say', he asked, 'that God thinks evil? That is a wise tale of the Mahometans of the angel of the Lord that murdered the infant. Is not every infant that dies of disease murdered by an angel?'

In his description of his picture of the Last Judgement he has given fuller expression to some of his ideas on this subject. 'I do not consider either the just or the wicked to be in a supreme state; but to be every one of them states of the sleep which the soul may fall into in its deadly dreams of good and evil, when it leaves Paradise following the serpent.' And again, 'The treasures of heaven are not negations of passions, but realities of intellect, from which the passions emanate, uncurbed in their eternal glory. The fool shall not enter into heaven, let him be ever so holy. Holiness is not the price of entrance into heaven. Those who are cast out are all those who, having no passions of their own, have spent their lives in curbing and governing other people's by the various arts of poverty and cruelty of all kinds. The modern church crucifies Christ with the head downwards.'

It is only by a comparison of Blake's scattered utterances on this subject that the consistency and

singleness of his doctrine is made apparent. His note on Homer's poetry shows how the same strain of thought is applied to Art—from which indeed, in all likelihood, it had its origin. 'Aristotle says Characters are either Good or Bad: now Goodness or Badness has nothing to do with Character, an Apple-tree, a Pear-tree, a Horse, a Lion are Characters, but a Good Apple-tree or a bad, is an Apple-tree still; a Horse is not more a Lion for being a Bad Horse: that is its Character, its Goodness or Badness is another consideration.' To tell Blake of any individual man that he was good or bad was to tell him nothing to the purpose; 'I have never known', he said, 'a very bad man who had not something very good about him.' He cried out on all who sit in judgment on others. 'Of the Old Testament', says Crabb Robinson, 'he seemed to think not favourably. Christ, said he, took after his mother, the Law'—a statement which he explained by referring to the turning out of the money-changers from the Temple. In short, these moral distinctions of good and bad seemed to Blake to be the most mischievous of Universal forms, or abstract terms, devised by the Reasoning power of man as sign-posts, to guide him or warn him in the pursuit of his selfish ends. By the use of these vague and general distinctions all that is most characteristic or significant in the individual object was obliterated, he thought, and lost. So Los, exploring the mental states symbolized by London districts,

> Saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down
> The kennels of the streets and lanes as if they were abhorr'd.
> Every Universal Form was become barren mountains of Moral Virtue; and every Minute Particular harden'd into grains of Sand:
> And all the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth and mire.

'The Moral virtues do not exist,' said Blake. 'They

are allegories and dissimulations. But Time and Space are real beings.' And the minute particulars—'the little ones', as Blake calls them—which are of faith and not of demonstration, the things seen and felt, which are moments in the life of man; these exist, and are eternal;

To those who enter into them they seem the only substances,
For every thing exists and not one sigh nor smile nor tear,
One hair nor particle of dust, not one can pass away.

This is the real world, created out of the void as an act of mercy, the world which its Creator looked on, and behold, it was very good. It is the manifestation of that energy which is eternal delight.

The sea-fowl takes the wintry blast for a covering to her limbs:
And the wild snake the pestilence to adorn him with gems and gold:
And trees and birds and beasts and men behold their eternal joy:
Arise you little glancing wings and sing your infant joy!
Arise and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy!

Most men to whom has been granted the clear dream and the solemn vision, have felt impelled, at the maturity of their powers, to descend from the mount of contemplation, and to endeavour, in the dust and heat of the arena, to do something for the better ordering of human life. But Blake, believing in no institutions, felt no such temptation. The poet, to whom is given imagination and vision, is false to his faith if he turns his back on the revelation in order to handle the machinery of worldly power and worldly ambition. The most famous of the poets who took up with these lowlier tasks are severely censured by Blake. Of Dante he said, 'He was an Atheist—a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till in his old age he returned to God, whom he had had in his childhood'. The anarchist's objection to Law,

the mystic's objection to Rational process, are no less strong when Law and Reason become weapons in the hand of a triumphant democracy. Blake goes straight to the point when he speaks of the aims of the Revolutionary party. 'You cannot have liberty,' he said, 'in this world, without what you call moral virtue, and you cannot have moral virtue without the subjection of that half of the human race who hate what you call moral virtue.' So tyranny succeeds to tyranny, self-righteousness is throned, and the age of innocence and brotherhood is more remote than ever.

Yet these things are; and Blake is forced to recognize the existence of Evil. The experience came to him late and slowly. His whole-hearted joy in the world kept the enemy for long at bay. Even in the *Songs of Experience* the old simplicity and happiness reassert themselves:

> For I dance,
> And drink, and sing,
> Till some blind hand
> Shall brush my wing.

He does not agonize with the Fate that holds him in its grasp; his peaceful, almost infantine, submission to the Power that is so cruelly strong in its dealings with those who struggle against it, saved him from anything like a tragedy of thought. He lay still, and knew no fear. The trouble, when it came to him, came in the form, not of doubt, but of bewilderment and sorrow of heart. The reign of love and of natural happy impulse is partial and precarious. Against it are ranked all the baser passions—fear, envy, anger, jealousy, covetousness—which Blake unites under the single name of Self-hood. These restrain the innocent desires of man, and combat his natural promptings, and paralyse his will, and deny his instinctive faith. In place of pity and dear mutual forgiveness, they set up a spectral fiend whose only word is 'Thou shalt

not', a polypus of death, withering the human form by laws of chastity and abhorrence. The struggle between this Satan and the redeeming power of love and pity is the central theme of all the Prophetic Books, and is there set forth with an immense array of visionary terminology, yet clearly enough in effect. The whole creation groans and travails; but Blake never wavers in his belief that the empire of Satan is the empire of nothing. Self-hood is not a positive and creative power; it is a distorted and reversed reflection in darkness and non-entity. The passions on which its reign is built are themselves mere negations; they drain the blood, and arrest the beating of the heart, and are inimical to life in all its forms. Fear, which is the chief and most terrible of them, is the parent of all the rest, and is lord over

> the trembling throng
> Whose sails were never to the tempest given.

While the soul is a fount of action, spending itself without stint on outward objects, joy and faith are supreme; but when its activities flag, when it becomes distrustful of itself and afraid of the world, defensive, secretive, eager to husband its resources, it falls under the control of Satan, and reasons, and doubts, and inhibits, and measures, and denies. Everything that it touches is blighted by the contact.

> He who bends to himself a joy
> Doth the wingèd life destroy;
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

Blake saw the whole of human life, not as a drama of the fall and redemption of man in great decisive acts, but as a continual fall and a continual redemption. Angels, he said, are always becoming devils; every man has a devil; and the conflict is eternal between a man's self and God. He saw it, not as

a golden world suffering from the tyranny of an external oppressor, whose downfall shall herald the millennium, but as a long intestinal antipathy and struggle between native forces, to be ended only by conciliation and a new method of harmony. In his earlier work he often seems to speak of the thwarting and negating forces as if they were intrusive and removable. But his thought did not long rest content with the almost idiotic simplicity of Revolutionary theory. If Self-hood be the enemy, the enemy is in possession of the citadel; and any call to arms for the defence of man is answered by traitors, who exact the price of their service rendered to the cause of liberation by ensconcing themselves more closely in domestic and moral tyranny. The dual nature of man is an old and difficult problem, which has exercised all poetry that pretends to thought:

> Oh, wearisome condition of humanity!
> Born under one law, to another bound,
> Vainly begot, and yet forbidden vanity,
> Created sick, commanded to be sound;
> What meaneth nature by these diverse laws?

Blake, following the mystic who wrote the account of the Fall in Genesis, found the only likely explanation and answer where it had been found before him by Plato, and by the poets of the East, and by the most philosophic of the Elizabethans—in the fact of sex.

Here, at the very heart of things, there is war and division;

> For the strife of Love 's the abysmal strife,
> And the word of Love is the Word of Life.

The most mysterious and strongest of all forms of self-assertion is built into the life of the race. Man, who dreams of harmony within himself and of benevolence towards others, is mocked and haunted by a tyrant passion which sets him at odds with the

world, defeats his reason, and laughs at his purposes. The desire which dominates his life is that which gave him birth :

> Our blood to us, this to our blood is born.

If he attempt escape, the only way that lies open to him leads to emaciation and death. A heaven of delight and the well-being and perpetuity of his kind is promised to him as the reward of his triumph in aggression and self-assertion. The love that makes the world go round is elemental, savage, exclusive, defiant, in man for woman, in woman for the child of her throes. Every man, by the law of his being, is an adventurer and a warrior ; every woman, by the law of her being, is bound to regard herself as her dearest trust. The treaties, the armistices, the conquests and surrenders, the flights and pursuits that mark the course of the long war of the sexes are incidents in a campaign where victory is the prize of self-assertion. Generosity and self-sacrifice, where they occur, are the luxuries of the victor or the forbearances of the powerful.

The cruel splendours and relentless self-seeking of the passion of love are directly opposed to the gentleness, pity, and self-annihilation of that other love which seeketh not its own. The contrast between the two is often set forth by Blake. In the little poem called *The Clod and the Pebble* he gives a voice to each. The clod of clay, trodden beneath the cattle's feet, sings thus :

> Love seeketh not itself to please,
> Nor for itself hath any care,
> But for another gives its ease,
> And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

And the Pebble of the brook, polished, rounded, and self-contained, replies :

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

Most of the religions and philosophies which have taught self-sacrifice have been driven in the direction of nihilism; they have either condemned all natural lusts, or they have fenced them off from the precincts of religion, giving them permission to roam at will in the outskirts. Neither of these courses was possible to Blake. Desire was still to him the authentic voice of the divinity in man; and the cherishing of unacted desires was an offence against humanity:

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,
But Desire gratified
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

The gratification of desire needs no law and no argument to prove it good; even from the tomb the voice of nature cries:

Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering churchyard?
And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
Over his porch these words are written, Take thy bliss O Man!

Blake said that Milton once appeared to him and warned him not to be misled by *Paradise Lost* into thinking that carnal pleasures arose from the Fall. 'The Fall could not produce any pleasure.'

In all this there is difficulty and contradiction enough. Pleasure is a divine good, but pleasure is entangled with self-hood, which is the great evil. The contradiction is in the things themselves, not in the statement of them; and it is the genesis of Blake's mysticism. The body of death which oppresses us, the whole 'Vegetable Universe' which clogs the swift spirit of life and joy, is identified by Blake with Nature

herself. 'I fear Wordsworth loves nature,' he said to Crabb Robinson, 'and nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are nature.' The same thought appears in his poem *To Tirzah*—the goddess who stands in his mythology for the religion of Nature:

> Thou Mother of my Mortal part
> With cruelty didst mould my Heart,
> And with false self-deceiving tears
> Didst bind my Nostrils, Eyes, and Ears;
>
> Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay,
> And me to Mortal Life betray:
> The Death of Jesus set me free:
> Then what have I to do with thee?

When Blake uses the language of Christian theology, as he so frequently does, he gives to it his own meaning. The second of the foregoing stanzas needs for comment some such passage as the following, taken from his notes *For the Year 1810*: 'All things are comprehended in their eternal forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the true vine of eternity, the Human imagination, who appeared to me as coming to judgment among his Saints, and throwing off the temporal that the eternal might be established.' In the real, eternal, or imaginative world—for the terms are used interchangeably—the warring powers that divide the empire of the soul of man are reconciled and united. Heaven and Hell, in this scheme, are not true opposites; they are the dwelling-places of those divorced powers of the soul whose greatest glory and strength shall be found in their ultimate union. Between the two realms angels are continually ascending and descending. When the long severance shall find an end, when love shall be the only fulfilling of the law, when the power that hides in Self shall cease to oppose and deny, and shall be merged in joyous impulse, the

consummation of all things will be attained in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

In the meantime Blake recognizes only one religion for dwellers on this earth, the religion of the continual forgiveness of sin. This is the Religion of Jesus, 'the most Ancient, the Eternal and the Everlasting Gospel'. There is nothing more wonderful in Blake's poetry than the long fragmentary poem on this theme, inspired throughout with a kind of divine frenzy.

> Jesus was sitting in Moses' Chair.
> They brought the trembling woman there.
> Moses commands she be ston'd to death.
> What was the sound of Jesus' breath?
> He laid his hand on Moses' Law;
> The ancient heavens, in silent awe,
> Writ with Curses from Pole to Pole,
> All away began to roll.

Whenever Blake speaks on this subject of forgiveness, what he says is full of insight and beauty. In his notes on the Last Judgment these passages occur:

'It is not because angels are holier than men or devils that makes them angels, but because they do not expect holiness from one another, but from God only.'

'Angels are happier than men or devils because they are not always prying after good and evil in one another, and eating the tree of Knowledge for Satan's gratification.'

The three Furies he represented, contrary to the usual practice, as male beings, and he adds this quaint note, 'The spectator may suppose them clergymen in the pulpit, scourging sin instead of forgiving it'. Forgiveness, as Blake conceives of it, allows of no limits. If it be offered in consideration of amends made, or on condition that the offence be not repeated, it is a bargain and not forgiveness. The only true forgiveness is a movement of love and pity called forth by the offence as inevitably as a grain of sand in the eye will cause the tears to flow. And this is the beginning

and the end of religion. By Blake's account of the matter, evil, in all its terror and potency, like Satan armed in gold, came into the world not with the first offence, but with the first judgment on the offender. It is from the judgment-seat that clouds of blood and ruin have rolled over the world. 'Come then,' he says, in his daring apostrophe at the end of the second part of *Jerusalem*,—

> Come then, O Lamb of God, and take away the remembrance of Sin.

The live power of this belief in Blake's own mind and heart may be seen in those poems—and they are many—which reveal the marvels of his tenderness. There was surely never a poet whose feelings responded more delicately to all the appeals of frailty and weakness and ignorance and helplessness. The poem called *Auguries of Innocence* is a lexicon of pity, and a biography of the gentle heart. Some of the couplets of which it is made up are idylls of beauty:

> The wild Deer wand'ring here and there
> Keeps the Human Soul from Care.

Some have that strange metaphysical insight which sees all things in each, and eternity in an hour:

> He who torments the Chafer's Sprite
> Weaves a Bower in endless Night.
> The Catterpiller on the Leaf
> Repeats to thee thy Mother's grief.
> Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
> For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.

This, and other poems laden with the thought that springs from the heart—poems like *The School Boy*, or *A Little Boy Lost* in the *Songs of Experience*—give meaning to Blake's claim that pity is vision and that sympathy with weakness is strength:

> For a Tear is an Intellectual thing:
> And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King:

And the bitter groan of a Martyr's woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow.

The sweetness and the rapture of desire give place, in the later poems, to the more unchanging love that is born of sorrow. Here, at last, love has found the secret of peace and endurance:

I thought Love lived in the hot sunshine,
But O, he lives in the Moony light!
I thought to find Love in the heat of Day,
But sweet Love is the Comforter of Night.

Seek Love in the Pity of others' Woe,
In the gentle relief of another's care,
In the darkness of night and the Winter's Snow,
In the naked and outcast, seek Love there!

Blake deals with the deepest and most obscure problems, and deals with them, for the most part, in a language of his own. His biographers and critics have found it work enough to attempt the mere exposition of his views, and have refrained from discussion and criticism. While the understanding of his meaning is still so far from complete, how should there be a sure ground for controversy? Those parts of his work which are written in any recognized metre have now, at last, found a trustworthy and scholarly editor in Mr. John Sampson. But much remains to do before the field is open for the critic. All the extant works must be competently and reverently edited. A concordance of the Prophetic Books must be prepared, marking the appearances and functions of each of the personages of the visionary mythology. If this essay, which pretends to no such ordered exposition, has succeeded in showing that Blake's meaning, caught here in flying glimpses from the less obscure of his writings, promises good hope of reward to the more laborious experiment, it has done all it can do. Fuller criticism must be reserved for fuller knowledge.

Yet even the reader of Blake who has brought no systematic implements to the work of mining, but has wandered and browsed on the surface of the Prophetic Books, may without offence record his superficial and modest impressions. To the most casual observer there is something remarkable in the history of this prophet and of his works. It is more than a hundred years since he made his first appearance, and he has found a fair number of biographers, editors, and expositors. Yet no one of these can speak with authority. Some have made of him a mere groundwork on which to embroider their own opinions; some have lavished the highest praise on the imitative work of his boyhood, and have ignored his later, stronger, and darker work; some have seen in him a clumsy writer of allegories; some have thrown the whole force of their criticism into a discussion of the nature and methods of madness. There is not one of the number but has parted from his task with a sense of dissatisfaction and defeat. Blake is a prophet without disciples.

His imaginative mythology may yield up its meaning to the rack and thumb-screw of a scientific criticism: it yields neither pleasure nor enlightenment to the wandering lover of beauty. In this world of howling and groaning giants all is violence and contortion and monotony. Here and there in the Prophetic Books the reader finds, with a sweet sense of relief, that he has strayed into an oasis:

> A little moony night and silence,
> With Spaces of sweet gardens and a tent of elegant beauty:
> Closed in by a sandy desert and a night of stars shining,
> And a little tender moon, and hovering angels on the wing.

But he must take up his burden again, and go forth into the gloomy desert of the Titans. He will need all his faith and determination if he is to escape from

the assaults of the recurring doubt—is it possible that the secret of human life lies hid in this darkness, or that these shadowy and grotesque nonentities are true symbols of God's eternal variety and plenty poured out in the world of sun and rain ?

Blake started in life with as pure and tender a gift of imagination as has ever fallen to the lot of man. If that imagination went astray, some explanation is needed. His own doctrine of the imagination gives cause for disquietude. ' Imagination ', he said, ' is the divine vision, not of the world, nor of man, nor from man as he is a natural man, but only as he is a spiritual man. Imagination has nothing to do with memory.' And again, ' Natural objects always did, and now do, weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me '. ' I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action.' This doctrine, let it be said in all sincerity, may be good and true for the seer ; it is certainly bad and false for the artist. It leaves Blake without a reason for drawing a man with two legs. His own pictorial art suffered from his belief that nature is the work of the devil. At its best, it has great nobility and dignity of outline, a grave solemnity, and a keen feeling for little tendernesses of attitude and incident. But he uses his eyes too seldom, so that his treatment of the human figure is habitually crude, violent, exaggerated, and wilful. Nature, whatever be the power that created her, is unfailing in the revenge she takes on the man who cheapens her. Let an artist neglect the loving study of the life, and his work will lose power even while he talks. If Blake's powers miscarried, it was not from any failure of his reason, which remained strong and sane to the end, but from the pride of his imagination, which mocked the meat it should have fed on. It seems almost as if, in the language of his own mythology, his Spectre had usurped

the seat of his imaginative powers, and had made these powers the engine of a violent egotism; while his Emanation, under whose genial impulse he had written the *Songs of Innocence*, and had poured out his heart to the natural world in many tender, feminine observances, lay bound in captivity, 'weeping incessantly for his sin'. In his prophetic fury he lost touch with the natural world, and lost something of that humility and expectancy which alone can make the natural world a school for the powers of the artist.

It was an ill day for Blake when he first made acquaintance with the works of Emmanuel Swedenborg. Up to that time the Bible and the poems of Milton had been, beyond compare, the most influential of the books he had read. Swedenborg offered him a new method, utterly unlike anything to be found in Milton, and without adequate scriptural precedent, save in parts of the weakest and last of the books of the New Testament. The writings of Swedenborg have something of the fascination of authentic vision; but the springs of refreshment trickle out from mountains of inanity and laborious pedantry. Blake was, in a certain sense, illiterate, even to the end; and Swedenborg was the worst possible teacher for him. It is easy to decry the academic processes of verbal education, but these processes have their uses. They do little, it is true, to enrich a man's nature, or to increase his reserve of natural power. But they put him on his guard against the deceits of verbiage, and render him immune from the insidious encroachments of high-sounding nonsense. They submit even the imagination to a civil and social discipline, and compel the bard to express himself with a decent respect for the intellectual habits of his fellow men. This classic discipline, which has never yet, by itself, been the making of a good poet, but which has saved the world from the pretentious follies of many a dunce and the

brilliant futilities of many a man of genius, was exactly what Blake most needed. But he was born in an age when the masters of this grave and ancient school had fallen half-asleep over their task, and were droning out lessons that made but little appeal to the affections and the imagination; so that he recoiled from them in contempt, and fell into the arms of the first enthusiast who held out to him glittering promises. He passes some cool enough criticisms, it is fair to say, on the system of Swedenborg. Swedenborg, he said, was a Divine teacher; but was wrong 'in endeavouring to explain to the rational faculty what the reason cannot comprehend. He should have left that.' Yet, though the doctrine of correspondences, in all its monstrous mechanical elaboration, failed of acceptance, the virus of the system, with its symbolism and esoteric vision, passed into Blake's thought, and made a galloping progress. To one whose visualizing power was naturally strong almost to the point of hallucination the symbolic creed offered irresistible attractions. It endowed his waking dreams with the value of a philosophy and the force of a gospel. So began, it may be, the misapplication of the doctrine of double vision, whereby double vision was based not on what is presented by the natural world to the bodily eye, but on fantasies which were themselves a mirage of the life of the intellect, and which, by a further process of abstraction, must be re-interpreted by the reader into general terms—vapour passing from the visible state back into the invisible. Blake was conscious of this tendency in himself, and, until it took complete possession of him, lamented it. 'My abstract folly', he writes in 1801 to Mr. Butts, 'hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over mountains and valleys, which are not real, into a land of abstraction where spectres of the dead wander. . . . Who shall deliver me from this spirit of abstraction?'

It may well be that the visionary writings will yield a fuller meaning to the investigator when the code of interpretation is discovered. But even if this should be achieved, the force of the objection is not impaired. What can be intelligibly deciphered can be intelligibly expressed so that it needs no deciphering. And if, on the other hand, the vision revealed in the Prophetic Books is a true vision of real things, as various and inscrutable in meaning as the world of sense, it must be judged as that world is judged, by its direct appeal, its inherent virtue and beauty. Blake's world of over-laboured giants has no form nor comeliness; it is a nightmare, broken by sudden miracles of spiritual insight, and irradiated by wonderful gleams of tender memory, coming far and faint from that world of sense which, in his later speculations, he despised.

The difficulty of criticizing Blake fairly is increased to the point of desperation by the enormous nature of his claims. He asks to be considered not as a poet, content to rest his fame on the finest of his achievements, but as a prophet, whose vision of things, consistent in all its parts, must be accepted or rejected in its entirety. The reader who feels the fascination and beauty of his work, and is willing to accept the author's own exposition of it, yet cannot avoid misgivings. Blake has not the assured calm of the greatest visionaries. He shows, at times, the most superb indifference to the blindness of those who deny his faith. But this is only one of his moods; at other times he is irritable, captious, rancorous, and vents his annoyance in a fusillade of epigram and satire. Some of this is striking in its grotesque humour and the fierceness of its hostility, as when he consigns his rivals to perdition, and tells how

> Death sits laughing on their Monuments,
> On which he 's written ' Received the Contents '.

But let a prophet beware of satire. He may curse the adversaries of his faith; he may not laugh at them. Laughter, when it is employed as a weapon, is an appeal to common sense. All genuine laughter implies or invites sympathy, and refers the question at issue to the tribunal of current opinion. There is something disconcerting and inhuman about the loud and fierce laughter of one who laughs alone. It is the war-cry of defiant and injured vanity, and bears witness to the hurt received. But the seer who lives in the confidence and peace of his own vision is incapable of hurt. He worships at the temple's inner shrine, and takes no part in the noisy contentions of the market-place.

Blake, whose sympathy for children was so wonderfully quick and true, felt but scant sympathy for grown men. He was self-absorbed and self-involved during all his later years. He sought no disciples, and founded no Church, but was content to remain an eccentric, a recluse, and an Ishmaelite. The dreams wherein he saw angels ascending and descending were dreamed in the studio, not under the open sky; and he received no promise that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. His dreams are all that is left of him for our inheritance—dreams often broken and troubled, but illumined, even at their darkest, by those wonders of joy and innocence which were the gift to him of that God whom he had had in his childhood.

SHELLEY[1]

More than the others of that group of English poets who flourished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and whose work, taken as a whole, gives to English literature its all but greatest glory, Shelley was the inheritor and the exponent of the ideas of the French Revolution. The French Revolution aroused and then disappointed Wordsworth, causing him to turn away from political ideals and to seek consolation in universal nature; it made Byron a rebel, and Southey a Laureate; but it gave birth to Shelley. And the chief effect of the Revolution on English life and thought is to be sought in literature rather than in politics. The great wave that broke over Europe in the roar of the Napoleonic wars spent its strength in vain on the political structure of these islands, but the air was long salt with its spray. And the poems of Shelley, if it be not too fanciful to prolong the figure, are the rainbow lights seen in the broken wave.

The ideas of the Revolution and the passion of the Revolution glitter and vibrate in Shelley's poems. And these ideas, it must be remembered, in their earlier and cruder political forms, had but a short spell of life. They bred the giant that killed them; the modern scientific and historical temper finds it wellnigh impossible to regain the outlook of those who stood breathlessly waiting for the revelation of a new heaven and a new earth. So that it is not to be wondered at if the poetry that sprang from the political creed has been to some extent involved in the downfall of the creed. Certain it is that few of his readers, even among his professed admirers, read Shelley for his

[1] Introduction to *Poems by Shelley*, George Bell and Sons, 1902.

meaning; few, even among his critics, treat his message seriously. The people of England, said Burke, want 'food that will stick to their ribs'; and the remark condenses in a phrase all that dissatisfaction with theory and dream which is heard as an undertone in most of the authoritative criticisms of Shelley. The poet has achieved immortality, but not on his own terms. He is 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel'—a decorator's angel, one might almost say, designed for a vacant space, not the authentic messenger of the will of Heaven. Or he is a moonlight visitant that soothes the soul with melodious words and beautiful images when the bonds of reality are loosened. As a prophet he is lightly esteemed, but when once the prophet's mantle is gently removed from his shoulders by tender official hands, he is welcome to stay with us, and to delight us in all restful places by the subtle marvels of his lyrical craft, and the iridescent play of his creative fancy.

Yet seeing that a poet is a poet only in so far as he reveals the beauty and the power that is universal and enduring caught from the confused lights and shadows of his own time, it is worth the pains to examine the main ideas that animate the poetry of Shelley. Some of these, it may not be denied, are utterly fallen from power. Like other revolutionary thinkers, Shelley hopes for the salvation and perfection of mankind by way of an absolute breach with the past. History is to him at best a black business, an orgy of fantastic and luxurious cruelty. Commerce is 'the venal interchange of all that human art and nature yield'. Gold—how far would gold have enthralled the imagination of poets if it had been a dull black substance with a slightly unpleasant scent?—gold is a god, or demon, of dreadful strength. Education and tradition, institution and custom are made the marks of the same impassioned invective, simple

sometimes almost to thoughtlessness, as in that passage of *Laon and Cythna* where British parental authority is thus described:

> The land in which I lived by a fell bane
> Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side
> And stabled in our homes;

sometimes rising to heights of grave denunciation, as in that other passage where is described how

> The Queen of slaves,
> The hood-winked angel of the blind and dead,
> Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
> Where her own standard desolately waves
> Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.

Yet this multiplied oppression, which is imposed on man by man himself, which has grown with his growth and is intertwined with his dearest interests, is conceived of by the revolutionary theorists and, at least in his earlier poems, by Shelley himself, as a thing separable from man, a burden laid on him by some dark unknown power, a net weaved around him by foreign enemies. One resolute act of inspired insurrection, and the burden may be cast off for ever, the net severed at a blow, leaving man free, innocent, and happy, the denizen of a golden world.

In his later and maturer poems we may detect Shelley's growing suspicion that the burden of man is none other than the weight of 'the superincumbent hour', or of the atmosphere that he breathes; that the net has its fibres entangled with the nerves of his body and the veins and arteries that feed his life. Yet he neither faltered nor repented; he had learned

> To hope, till hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;

and if the tyrant that oppresses mankind is immitigable

Reality, he will be a rebel against Reality in the name of that fairer and no less immortal power, the desire of the heart.

Shelley is the poet of desire. To him, as to Blake, the promptings of desire were the voice of divinity in man, and instinct and impulse bore the authentic stamp of the Godhead. His pure and clear and wonderfully simple spirit could hardly conceive of a duty that travels by a dim light through difficult and uncertain ways, still less of a duty that calculates and balances and chooses. When he was lifted on the crest of some overmastering emotion, he saw all clear; dropped into the hollow, he could only wait for another wave. It is as if he could not live save in the keen and rarified air of some great joy or heroic passion; and his large capacity for joy made him the more susceptible to all that thwarts or depresses or interrupts it. These two strains, of rapture and of lament, of delight in love and beauty, and of protest against a world where love and beauty are not fixed eternal forms, run through all the poetry of Shelley, answering each other like the voices of a chorus. Our life on earth seems to him a stormy vision, a wintry forest, a 'cold common hell'; but it has moments of exaltation which belie it, and by their power and intensity hold out a promise of deliverance. Thought and passion transform the dull suffering of this life into the likeness of 'a fiery martyrdom', and by their very intensity bear witness to the greatness of the issues at stake.

It is somewhat absurdly made a charge against Shelley that the ideal which he sets before humanity is not a practical or possible one. He had to deal with this sort of criticism during his lifetime, and in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* he offers a grave explanation: 'It is a mistake', he says, 'to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to

the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life.' No exact political programme is deducible from his works. No coherent or satisfactory account can be given of the changes that would be necessary to bring in the idyllic society that mocks his vision in the distance. But if the aspirations of a poet are to be tethered to what is demonstrably attainable, the loftiest legitimate ambition ever breathed in English verse would perhaps be found in those lines of *The Excursion* where an earnest wish is expressed for a System of National Education established universally by Government. The creed of the Revolution was a noble creed, and although Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, considered as the basis of a political system, have been sadly battered by political artillery, they have not yet been so completely disgraced that it is forbidden to a poet to desire them. Only in a world where they shall be more desired than they are with us can they ever become possible. And the gist of Shelley's teaching lies not in this or that promise held out of future good, but in the means that he insists on for its realization. The elusive vagueness of the millennium pictured in the weakest part of *Prometheus Unbound* detracts no whit from the loftiness and truth of the great speech of Demogorgon and the closing World-symphony. The early Christians, too, were deceived in their hopes of the millennium, but they, like the early alchemists, went not unrewarded by ' fair, unsought discoveries by the way '.

The very vagueness of Shelley's poetry is an essential part of its charm. He speaks the language of pure emotion, where definite perceptions are melted in the mood they generate. Possessed by the desire of escape, he gazes calmly and steadily on nothing of earthly build. Every visible object is merely another

starting-point for the cobwebs of dreams. Like his own poet,

> He will watch from dawn to gloom
> The lake-reflected sun illume
> The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
> Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
> But from these create he can
> Forms more real than living man,
> Nurslings of immortality.

His thoughts travel incessantly from what he sees to what he desires, and his goal is no more distinctly conceived than his starting-place. His desire leaps forth towards its mark, but is consumed, like his fancied arrow, by the speed of its own flight. His devotion is 'to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow'; the voices that he hears bear him vague messages and hints

> Of some world far from ours
> Where music and moonlight and feeling are one.

And this perfect lyrical vagueness produces some of the most ghostly and bodiless descriptions to be found in all poetry. His scenery is dream-scenery; it can hardly be called cloud-scenery, for the clouds that tumble in a June sky are shapes of trim and substantial jollity compared with the shifting and diffused ether of his phantom visions. The scene of his poems is laid among

> Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
> And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist.

And the inhabitants are even less definite in outline; the spaces of his imagination are

> Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
> Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep.

The poet is himself native to this haunted and scarce

visible world; and when, in *Epipsychidion*, he tells of the Being who communed with him in his youth, it is in this world that they meet:

> On an imagined shore,
> Under the grey beak of some promontory
> She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
> That I beheld her not.

It is pleasant to consider what a critic of the school of Johnson, if any had survived, would have said of these lines. 'Here, Sir,' he might have said, 'he tells us merely that in a place which did not exist he met nobody. Whom did he expect to meet?' Yet the spirit of Romance, which will listen to no logic but the logic of feeling, is prompt to vindicate Shelley. The kind of human experience that he set himself to utter will not admit of chastened and exact language; the homeless desires and intimations that seem to have no counterpart and no cause among visible things must create or divine their origin and object by suggestion and hyperbole, by groping analogies, and fluttering denials. To Shelley life is the great unreality, a painted veil, the triumphal procession of a pretender. Yet, here and there, in the works of Nature and of Art—'flowers, ruins, statues, music, words,'—there are sudden inexplicable glories that speak of reality beyond. It is from the images and thoughts that are least of a piece with the daily economy of life, from the faithful attendants that hang on the footsteps of our exiled perceptions, and from the dwellers on the boundary of our alienated world, from shadows and echoes, dreams and memories, yearnings and regrets, that he would learn to give expression to this hidden reality. Yet the very attempt defeats itself and is reduced to the bare negation of appearances. The highest beauty, as he describes it, is always invisible; the liveliest emotion passes into swoon, and takes on the likeness of death. Demogorgon, the lord of the

Universe, is 'a mighty darkness, filling the seat of power'.

So habitual and familiar was Shelley's converse with this spectral world that both in his thought and in his expression it held the place of what is commonly called the real world. The figures of his poetry illustrate what is strange by what is familiar, and it is the shadows and spirits that are familiar. The autumn leaves scurrying before the wind remind him of 'ghosts from an enchanter fleeing'. The skylark in the heavens is 'like a poet hidden in the light of thought'. The avalanche on the mountain is piled flake by flake, as thought by thought is piled in heaven-defying minds,

> Till some great truth
> Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
> Shaken to their roots.

It is his outward perceptions that he seeks to explain and justify by a reference to the existences and forms that filled and controlled his daily meditations.

His poetry, as might be expected, has been found too remote and unsubstantial to satisfy the taste of many readers and even of some few lovers of poetry. It is lacking in human interest. The figures that he sets in motion are for the most part creatures of his own making, who have no tangible being outside the realm of his imagination. Minds that move naturally and easily only in the world of concrete existences are compelled to translate Shelley's poetry, as it were, into another dialect of the universal language, if they would grasp his meaning. Too often they have refused the task; they have been content to float along on his melody, and to indulge their sense of colour with the delicate tints of his vision. Even when he is thus read, there is no denying the matchless quality of his poetic genius, or the absolute mastery of

his art. But the wisdom of his reading of life, and the scope and depth of his thought, have sometimes been questioned.

He died young, and the accumulated wisdom of old experience was never within his reach. Yet before he died he had graduated in the school of suffering and had there learned lessons that only the wise heart learns. *Prometheus Unbound* is something more than a dance of prismatic lights and a concert of sweet sounds; it is a record of spiritual experience, subtle in its analysis, profound in its insight. The supreme torture of Prometheus, inflicted by the Furies, comes to him in the form of doubt—doubt lest his age-long sufferings should all be vain, and worse than vain. The Furies, who are 'hollow underneath, like death', and who darken the dawn with their multitude, are the ministers of pain and fear, of mistrust and hate. They plant self-contempt and shame in young spirits; they live in the heart and brain in the shape of base desires and craven thoughts. Of all passions, the ugliest in Shelley's eyes is Hate; the most terrible and maleficent is Fear. But Prometheus through his long agony feels no fear, and no rancour; the pity and love that endure in his heart are at last victorious, and the Furies, baffled, take themselves away. The first act is full of psychological study, and Shelley throughout is speaking of what he has felt and known and observed. But he embodies it in such unearthly forms, and so carefully avoids the allegorical manner, that the details of the drama, difficult as they often are of interpretation, have been wrongly regarded as freaks of ornament and fantasy. The main idea, the conception of Love and Life as a dualism, and of Love as the sole principle of freedom, joy, beauty, and harmony, in Nature and in Man, appears in Shelley's earlier poems, and strengthens with his growth, until it reaches its most magnificent expression

in the radiant figure of Asia and the closing rhapsody of *Adonais*.

> That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
> That Beauty in which all things work and move,
> That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
> Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
> Which through the web of being blindly wove
> By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
> Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
> The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me
> Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

His early death, though it has endeared him the more to his lovers, has also deprived him of a full meed of critical appreciation. The bulk of reputable criticism is written by middle-aged men, who have made their peace with the world, on reasonable and honourable terms, perhaps, but not without concessions. How should they do full justice to the young rebels, the Marlowes and the Shelleys, who died under the standard of revolt? They are tender to them, and tolerant, as to their younger selves. But they have accepted, where these refused, and they cannot always conceal their sense of the headstrong folly of the refusal. Nor can their judgment be disabled, for they have knowledge on their side, and experience, and the practical lore of life. Further, they can enlist poet against poet, and over against the heart that defies Power which seems omnipotent, they can set the heart that watches and receives. Is there not more of human wisdom to be learned from the quiet harvester of the twilight than from the glittering apostle of the dawn? Yet there is a wisdom that is not born of acceptance; and the spirit that is to be tamed to the uses of this world, if it has much to learn, has something also to forget. The severest criticism that the world and the uses of the world are called upon to undergo is that which looks out on them, ever afresh,

from the surprised and troubled eyes of a child. In the debate of Youth and Age, neither can expect to have it all his own way. It is therefore no unqualified condemnation of Shelley's poetry to say that it appeals chiefly to the young. And it is not true to say that it appeals to no others. Many men, it has been said, are poets in their youth; it would be truer to say that many born subjects of prose are tickled by sentiment in their youth, and beguiled by sense into believing, for a time, that they love poetry. The love of poetry is not so easily eradicable; it is not Time's fool,

> though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his blending sickle's compass come,

and wherever there are poets, to the end of time, Shelley will find lovers.

MATTHEW ARNOLD[1]

THE *Essays in Criticism* cannot be fully appreciated and understood if they are taken as a mere collection of discourses composed on various occasions and inspired by various subjects. They are something more, or at least they are something other, than that. Taken together they are a manifesto, an attempt to define, and to illustrate in practice, the vital functions of criticism. The first essay supplies the text which is expanded, diversified, and put into action in all the succeeding essays. In a letter written to his sister shortly after the *Essays* appeared, Matthew Arnold states the motive of the book. He was sincerely and gravely alarmed by the prospects and tendencies of English literature. On the one hand he saw the Latin races of the Continent, who preserve, as they have always preserved, in their practice as well as in their theory, some of the main traditions of the literatures of Greece and Rome. On the other hand he saw America, growing and thriving immensely, dependent for her literary teaching almost wholly on English traditions, and applying these traditions with a laxity and diffuseness which carried them still farther from the ancient models. 'An English writer', he says, 'may produce plenty of effect there, and this would satisfy people like Bright who think successful America will do quite as well for all they want, or even better, than successful England; but it will never satisfy me. Whatever Mary may say, or the English may think, I have a conviction that there is a real, an almost imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways, declining into a sort of greater Holland, for want of what I must still call ideas, for want of per-

[1] Introduction to *Essays in Criticism*, Gowans and Gray, 1912.

ceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing herself accordingly. This conviction haunts me, and at times even overwhelms me with depression; I would rather not live to see the change come to pass, for we shall all deteriorate under it. While there is time I will do all I can, and in every way, to prevent its coming to pass. Sometimes, no doubt, turning oneself one way after another, one must make unsuccessful and unwise hits, and one may fail after all; but try I must, and I know that it is only by facing in every direction that one can win the day.' It was with this aim, to arrest what he conceived to be the national decay, to lead English literature into the paths of sanity and wisdom, that Matthew Arnold became a critic, a missionary, a prophet. To the question, 'What must a national literature do to be saved?' he would have replied with confidence, 'It must generate a sound and enlightened criticism'. To him the critic seemed no less than the Saviour of Society.

The decisive change which drew him away from poetry and made criticism the business of his life came much earlier than 1865, the date of these essays. The whole of his literary teaching is foreshadowed in the remarkable Preface to the *Poems* of 1853, which well deserved, indeed, to be reprinted with these essays. In some ways it is more direct and harder hitting than anything in this volume. It contains his famous criticism of Shakespeare—'a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names'—as a poet who by his exuberance and lawlessness had misled his imitators. The habit of judging poets rather by their fitness as models for the young than by what is personal and incommunicable in them was strong in Matthew Arnold. The importance of influence and example was a lesson that he learned, no doubt, from his father at Rugby; and the main employments of his life were likely to impress

it yet more deeply. In 1851, at the age of twenty-eight, he took up his life-long task as an Inspector of Schools; from 1857 to 1867 he was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His tragedy of *Merope* was published, shortly after his appointment as Professor, to illustrate the value of the classical ideals. It is correct and cold and mechanical. The difference between *Merope* and Shakespeare's wildest work does not seem to have discouraged him, or to have suggested any doubts concerning the part played by sound poetic doctrine in the production of poetry. He never wavered in his faith, but thenceforward he was content, for the most part, to declare it in criticism and prose. The lectures *On Translating Homer*, published in 1861, set forth the creed once more, and endeavour to show how the fanciful tendencies of English speech impede it for the task of rendering the unadorned majesty of the greatest of the ancient poets.

In a sense, therefore, the critic in Matthew Arnold killed the poet, and killed him young. He did some great work in poetry later, on rare and high occasions, but the bulk of his poetry was written before he became a Professor. Thereafter he was concerned chiefly with what is communicable in literary practice, with architectural models, and the chastening of style. Sallies of wit and imagination pleased him not at all in poetry, and he speaks of them with a kind of reluctant tolerance. To his mind, they are at best decorations and details, merits of a part of the subject, only too likely to obscure and confuse the proportions of the whole, to which his attention was steadily directed. He lays all the stress of his teaching on construction. As a building should be designed to support, with no excess of strength and no defect, the weight of its own material, so a theme, in prose or poetry, must be treated to exhibit and uphold the weight of the mere event. All reflection and digression, all by-play and

cleverness, deforms and mars the main effect. A story must be allowed to tell itself, and to that end the most that the author can do is to furnish it with transparent words. If he is restless and egotistic and acrobatic, and intrudes exhibitions of his own skill, the effect is less telling. The gist of a play is its action, and care must be taken that every scene and every line of the play shall be made subservient to this, so that what comes home to the spectators shall come with the gravity and force of experience, purged of all that is irrelevant and accidental.

This is sound and ancient doctrine, and there is good reason to say that English poets, more than the poets of other races, have neglected it in their practice. Yet the question is not so simple as the metaphors that are used to expound it. Construction is too mechanical a word to describe the operation of the mind in a great poet. His theme, or story, may be given him, but so soon as his imagination gets to work on it, it is transformed to a new likeness. The process is a vital process, not external, like bricklaying; so that if architecture must needs be invoked, it is rather the architecture of the shell-fish, with its mysterious involutions and delicate suffusion of colour. No artist, however sedulously and reverently he may keep to the rules, dares to trust any part of his work that did not come to him. What he makes by rule he can explain by rule; but this, the vital and essential part of his work, is as surprising to him as it is to others. He laughs at his own wit, and weeps at his own pathos. A grave and simple mind—say the mind of Sophocles—conceives of human life gravely and simply, so that his words have the strength of the elements. Because his material is free to all, and his secret lies in the handling, many of those who admire his work, and yet more of those who know that it is admirable, are prone to believe that they can deduce from it a method

and a mechanism, which shall aid them in their own efforts. They study him, and follow him, and produce work of their own, free from all the faults of wayward genius, work that can never die, because it never lived.

Matthew Arnold was too good a poet not to know this. A sure instinct governed his poetic adventures, and made him refuse subjects and occasions which did not rouse and inspire him. Most of his poetry was born, not made. Yet there is little evidence that he remembered this when he became a preacher. He is too fond of speaking as if there were a saving grace in method. Ben Jonson's Roman plays conform much more perfectly to his standards than do any of the Roman plays of Shakespeare. But what profit is that, to them or to us, when nobody can read them ? The curse that rests on the academics of modern literature has sent *Merope* to join *Sejanus* in the limbo where everything is measured and correct.

It will be observed that among the names which are the subjects of these essays there is no English name. The ideals that are set before us are European or cosmopolitan, not national. That is at once their strength and their weakness. The classic doctrine belongs to the Latin civilization ; the doctrine of ideas, of the pure intelligence, freed from all local and temporal prejudices, belongs to those intellectual wayfarers who are citizens of the world, and refuse to contract themselves in narrower bonds. If London or Berlin were destroyed, they could live no less happily in Paris. Wherever they find intelligence and art, there they are among their own people. They are in no way attached to the soil. It is significant that what is perhaps the finest of these essays, the essay on Heinrich Heine, is an essay on a Jew. From Heine's mocking attacks on German middle-class complacency Matthew Arnold learned how to make war on his own countrymen ; the very term *Philistine*, a weapon with

which he did so much execution, was borrowed from Heine's armoury. The attitude that was natural to Heine, standing aloof, as he did by necessity, from national custom and national sentiment, whether in France or Germany, seems less graceful in Matthew Arnold. There is no evidence that he ever understood the English character. With incredible lightness he speaks of 'prescription and routine' as things evil in themselves when they get a hold upon a people! He preaches accessibility to ideas, readiness to move at the bidding of reason, and exalts the pure intelligence, which is depressed and impeded in England by a world of unreasoning custom and habit. There is no harm in this kind of preaching, taken as a stimulant, but it seems strangely to neglect the affections, which build their nest in custom and habit. The love which makes the world go round is not the love of the pure idea; and the defect of Matthew Arnold, as a critic of England, is that he had too little affection for England. It is not easy to divine how the English people, if, by the operation of some mad miracle, they had moulded themselves on his teaching, could have remained English. All that is peculiar to them seems to offend him. Their upper classes are barbarian; their middle classes are Philistine, their lower classes are completely negligible for the purposes of the pure intelligence—mere populace. He stands among them, a well-bred, highly-cultivated stranger, and tries to win them to the light. But there is nothing in what he says, or in what he implies, to indicate that he would have felt any disappointment, any sense even of partial loss, if they had all become French philosophers or wandering Jews.

These considerations are not irrelevant, for Matthew Arnold became more and more, in his later work, a critic of English literature, which is an intensely national literature, and can be only imperfectly criti-

cized from the cosmopolitan point of view. That, and no other, was his point of view, from first to last. His criticism is a good antidote to parochialism. His condemnations, based as they are on a knowledge of the great work that has been done in other countries and in bygone ages, are sound and often illuminative. But every literature is attached, by a myriad of invisible threads, to the life of its native speech, which is the creature, not of pure reason, but of national custom and habit. There are many delicacies and implications in it which a foreign critic cannot feel. If he is a good scholar, he can see them ; but when they are elucidated by a process of study, they lose most of their effect ; they do not come home to him like a blow. All criticism of a foreign language really involves a kind of translation ; and translation, while it reveals some merits, obliterates others. In a certain sense, Matthew Arnold's attitude to English literature was that of a foreigner. He had nourished his youth on other pastures, and had no taste for many flavours that are racy of the English soil. When he wishes to show how poetry should be written, it is commonly a line of Homer, or Dante, or Goethe, that he quotes. It is a favourite exercise with him to set side by side extracts, in several languages, from the notable poems of different ages, and to use the comparison as a basis for dogmatic judgments on the authors. Differences of language, of aim, of circumstance, do not perplex him ; he sets up his tribunal, and applies his tests indifferently to all comers. If flowers had been his affair, and there had been ranged before him a rose, a tiger-lily, and a sprig of mignonette, he would have pointed out, with an air of great finality, that only the tiger-lily is grand.

The method of his criticism is essentially and wholly dogmatic. He believed in dogma and authority as engines of practical good, and in an academy as a means

of literary salvation. He wanted only the best and highest things from poetry; he was very quick to discern them, and was so confident in his judgment that he cared not at all to reason about them, or to analyse the causes of their greatness. He made very short work of bad poetry, and when it is remembered how England was overrun with bad poetry in the age after the great Romantics, this should be counted to his credit. Yet even when he treats of good poets, his method, sometimes just, is hardly ever sympathetic. He balances faults and virtues, without caring much to inquire how they came to grow up together in one mind. In his Essay on Shelley, written much later than the essays in this volume, he proposes to himself 'to mark firmly what is ridiculous and odious in the Shelley brought to our knowledge by the new materials, and then to show that our former beautiful and lovable Shelley nevertheless survives'. The fault of this procedure is that what survives is not Shelley at all, but 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'. It is impossible that any one who tries to conceive of Shelley as a live man and poet should find him at the same time ridiculous and odious, beautiful and lovable. A more careful and modest criticism will easily discern that it was in truth the author of *Alastor*, *Epipsychidion*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *Adonais*, who eloped with Mary Godwin. But Matthew Arnold cared only to judge deeds as deeds, and poems as poems; he was quite incurious about men. In his critical essays he presents us with many sound rules, and many memorable sentences, but no live man. How Shelley appeared to Shelley, what Keats thought of Keats—this most fascinating inquiry, not in itself very difficult to pursue, seems to interest him not at all. But when they write anything, or do anything, he is willing enough to judge it.

The world avenges itself on those men of genius

who try to convert it to their doctrines, by forgetting their doctrines and falling in love with themselves. Matthew Arnold must not be judged, and is not judged, by his teaching. It is the man who engages our attention, and who survives by what is most personal and whimsical in him. His manner in criticism was all his own : he was adorably insolent, priding himself on his courtesy and humanity, walking delicately among the little people of the earth, like a kind of Olympian schoolmaster dandy. In controversy he wielded enormous powers of irritation, wielded them and enjoyed them, though it seems doubtful whether he ever quite understood why the poor victims of them were irritated. His courtesies are a graceful trellis-work which leave just space enough for his contempt to peep through. Politeness, which, in its genuine form, is a clothing for the modesty of goodwill, with him is a suit of armour, worn to protect him from his adversaries. Nothing can exceed the quiet impertinence of his use of proper names. He manages, even in his writings, to give a slight stress of scornful intonation to names like Clutterbuck, or Cobbe, or Dodd, and seems gently to conduct the wearers of these names to a place outside the pale of humanity. Sometimes he does it merely by repeating the name oftener than is necessary, as if there were something essentially absurd in the owner of such a name daring to hold opinions on things of moment. It is all monstrously unfair, but his enjoyment of it is infectious. Some of his critical utterances on poetry have the same note of calm extravagance. What could be more whimsical than to attempt to judge the relative greatness of poets by a comparison of single lines chosen at random from their works ? That is how he treats Dante and Chaucer, setting a line from *The Prioress's Tale*—

O martyr souded to virginitee

over against a single line of Dante—

In la sua volontade è nostra pace.

It is nothing to him that the line from Chaucer is a mere vocative, and, strictly speaking, has no meaning, while the line from Dante tells the truth of all religion; he is exhibiting his powers as a virtuoso, a taster of different vintages, and is willing to write a whole dissertation on the two poets by the light of these two lines. Nothing so bizarre has ever been done in so serious a spirit since the foolish fellow of the classical story brought a sample brick to market in the attempt to sell his house. He too was a pedant, but he must yield the prize to the English professor, who taught poetic architecture all his life, and when he was asked to pass judgment on the merits of a church and a town-hall, was content to handle a brick from each.

His invincible air of superiority has interfered somewhat with his efficiency as an evangelist. He 'allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way', but, in spite of his protests, it is difficult to believe that he cares much about his followers. That is a sound maxim of the American satirist, addressed to reformers and philanthropists—'In uplifting, get underneath'. Would Matthew Arnold have been willing or able to learn anything from a wit of Chicago? He needed the lesson. But it is better perhaps not to take his mission-work too seriously. He enjoyed it, and expressed himself in it. The most memorable things in his prose work, as, for instance, his famous sentences on Oxford, take their power and magic from the memories and dreams of his own youth. He became involved, by the necessities of life, in the ugly machinery of education, where he found much that was wrong, and much that was pretentious and unreal. Poetry deals only with what is eternally right, and remedies the unreal by forgetting it. But it is difficult for a man

to forget insincerities which are presented to him afresh every morning. A very robust and spontaneous faculty of human sympathy might shake them off, or see through them. Matthew Arnold suffered from them, and took up the sinister weapon of prose argument to do battle with them. His poetry deals only with the great things—

> The day in his hotness,
> The strife with the palm;
> The night in her silence,
> The stars in their calm.

In his prose the great things are not forgotten; they are continually invoked as memories, and appealed to as standards. But they are distant, as they never are distant in the poems, so that his talk concerning them is like the talk of a country-dweller shut up among the brawls and noises of a city. He knows a better life, but he is put on his defence, and his voice learns the tone of mockery. For all that, he never forgets; and when, in a pause of the quarrel, he finds time to recall those 'regions mild of calm and serene air', he speaks of what he has seen and breathed.

IN MEMORIAM—JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER[1]

Mr. President, my Lords, and Gentlemen,

We are met to celebrate the memory of a very great man, and to do honour to the work in which he has perpetuated that memory. Mr. Whistler was a man good at many things; he was a wit, and a warrior, and the most versatile of craftsmen. But he was more than this; and it is as a creator and servant of beauty that he claims our remembrance to-night. Beauty, and beauty only, he said, was the justification and aim and end of a work of art. Surely, in the history of the world, there has seldom been a collection of the works of one man which was pervaded and inspired and possessed by the desire of beauty as the wonderful collection now to be exhibited in the New Gallery is pervaded and inspired and possessed. Every touch and every line in those canvases and prints bears its part in the unceasing quest and shares in the triumph of the capture. The labour is over; and we are permitted to take our pleasure, every man according to his capacity, in the rich reward.

You will not expect me, I am sure, in the face of these pictures, to discuss or expound any theories of art. The practice is better. Not the most brilliant of his theoretic utterances could express Mr. Whistler a hundredth part so adequately as these works of his. Indeed, his own theories, though they are neat and pointed and polished, edged with wit, and often animated by a profound knowledge, seem to me to fall far short of expressing him. He taught his age to look *at* a picture, not *through* it; and the lesson

[1] A speech delivered at the Café Royal, London, at the Banquet on the occasion of the opening of the Whistler Memorial Exhibition, 20 February 1905; published by Messrs. Heinemann.

was a needed one. But in his zeal to reprove the public for their preoccupation with incident and morality he was apt to deny to his pictures qualities which, after all, they have. Call a picture what you will, a pattern or a symphony, or an arrangement, or (if you like) call it merely a picture, still this is true of it: that when an artist has done his best at symphony, or arrangement, there comes to him sometimes an unsought increment on his effort; something that he did not consciously work for, perhaps does not even know that he has attained. In Mr. Whistler's figure-pieces there is often a tenderness and grace and pathos of human emotion which is unaccounted for by the theory, but which is his no less than the more purely optical qualities that he laid stress on. The intensity of his purpose overshoots itself and reveals to him more than he is seeking.

He stood aloof—more completely aloof, perhaps, than most other great artists have done—from the movements and schools of his own time. His early works belong to a notable time of artistic ferment. The Pre-Raphaelites were teaching what I may call their new morality of vision; the Impressionists were working out their new psychology of vision. He belonged to neither school. He picked up hints and suggestions, no doubt, from these and a hundred other sources, but in the main he was independent and original—in the right sense of that word. That is to say, he began at the beginning; in each of his works he creates afresh, as it were; he accepts every subject as presenting a new problem to be grappled with, a new set of conditions to be studied and subdued, by new devices, to the service of beauty. I am not decrying the utility of 'schools' if I say that the most robust and splendid of them may interfere, by the very greatness of their traditions, with that incessant watchfulness, that alert vitality, and that readiness for new experiment which is found in all Mr. Whistler's work. It is the misfortune of the schools that they

give a false importance to acquisitive and imitative talent. And there is one school, at least, which is apt to cramp the work even of a man of genius—the school of his own past successes. If the love of ease entices him, his very triumphs become his enemies, by tempting him into formula and repetition. But to the end of his life, Mr. Whistler never rested upon success; he went on seeking for new worlds to conquer. 'If you want to rest,' he once said to a friend who complained that there was no easy chair in his house—'if you want to rest you had better go to bed'—and the remark might be taken as the motto of his artistic career; as the motto, indeed, of the career of any artist.

An alertness like this finds its ample reward. It keeps a man's intelligence and sympathies open for new lessons from Art and Nature. It was by his sleepless activity of mind that Mr. Whistler was enabled to become the interpreter, and the pioneer in Europe, of the art of the Japanese. In this, I believe, he was something of a discoverer, and brought from the East, not gold nor spices, but a new charm. He may be said to have inaugurated, in the happiest way, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance—an Alliance which, in the realm of Art, is neither offensive nor defensive, but devoted to mutual appreciation and mutual delight—a kind of friendly tournament on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. And, besides Japan, there was another great teacher from whom he never ceased to learn—the Goddess Nature, whom he was wont to patronize with a certain humorous bravado. She had so much he did not want, that he was inclined to regard her as a busybody, an officious and too importunate saleswoman, pressing her garish stores of goods on his attention. Yet how much did he not learn from his sensitive and untiring observation of Nature? When did he cease to study her moving benediction of light? The public of his time asked a painter for recognizable and clearly defined pictorial symbols of

common objects. But these objects, to an eye not blinded by habit, exist in a strange submarine world, a shifting and glimmering sea of light and air. It was this sea that Mr. Whistler cared for—this sea in its gentlest undulating moods; and, although I dare not judge others by my own case, yet I believe there are many artists who were taught by his work, as I, in my layman's ignorance, was taught, to take a keener pleasure in observing how light caresses the surface of things, and how air softens their outlines.

But the highest praise remains to tell. Wherever artists are gathered together, Mr. Whistler cannot be too much honoured for what has been well called his 'implacable conscience'. He found no use on this earth for critics. But there never lived a severer critic of himself. Among all the temptations that assail an artist he walked so absolutely unspotted and unsubdued, with so confident a gaiety, that it seems unfair to say that he resisted temptation; it is almost as if he had never been tempted. He would destroy any of his works rather than leave a careless or inexpressive touch within the limits of the frame. He would begin again a hundred times over, rather than attempt, by patching, to make his work seem better than it was. He was not content till he had got what he wanted, and his work expressed himself at his best. And this was the cause, I think, of his remarkably strong sense of property in his pictures. They were his children, a part of himself, and that they should be sold into slavery, that anything so accidental and external as the payment of money should alienate or impair his rights in them, always seemed to him, I think, a mere piece of inhumanity and impertinence on the part of the law.

Consider the irony of things. Here was one of the most serious-minded men that have ever lived in this world. For a long time he was widely and authoritatively regarded as a trifler and a jester, one who evaded difficulties and sought a cheap reputation for

eccentricity. I will not remind you of any incidents in the famous trial, though it still has its lessons for artists and critics. Any one who takes up the full report of that trial and reads it now, will rub his eyes and wonder. It tells how the official worlds of Art and Criticism were ranged against Mr. Whistler and a few friends. Many of the witnesses no doubt repented later of their evidence—of being so busy with their tongues and so idle with their eyes. But no man goes through an experience of this kind untouched. Mr. Whistler went on with his work—that is the great thing—and provided himself with a defence against the world. Laughter, which is often used for defensive purposes by those who have good wits and sensitive tempers, became his shield and his spear. His attitude to the public was exactly the attitude taken up by Robert Browning, who suffered as long a period of neglect and mistake, in those lines of *The Ring and the Book* :

> Well, British Public, ye who like me not,
> (God love you !) and will have your proper laugh
> At the dark question :—laugh it ! I laugh first.

Mr. Whistler always laughed first. So he carried the war into the enemy's country. They treated the business which was no less than a religion to him as if it were a pretence and a trifle. What wonder if he treated in the same spirit the business which was most serious to them ? Politics, society, banking—these also are serious affairs. But one who comes across them in his moments of relaxation, after a long and grim struggle with one of the most difficult crafts in the world, may be excused if he finds in them plentiful opportunities for amusement. After all, an artist must be amused—it is the breath of his nostrils ; he must find delight or make it, whether from understanding things, or from indulging his humour in wilfully misunderstanding them. Where Mr. Whistler found delight in misunderstanding, he also gave delight

by his child-like glee and by his powers of wit—a wit not employed in great campaigns, but decorated and tempered and worn by the side, or flourished in the hand, as a fit addition to courtly dress.

He gained recognition at last. Wherever a man of genius spends an arduous life in the lonely pursuit of his aims, you find the same sequel, in posthumous subscriptions, or on graven memorial stones, or in those honorary degrees which are conferred by Universities on famous veterans. I am glad to think that the honorary degree which was conferred on Mr. Whistler some two years ago by the University of Glasgow gave him sincere pleasure. I know it was felt by those whose votes conferred it, that if a living painter was to be chosen from among the English-speaking peoples for academic honours, there could be no question what name to choose. I think the precedent was a good one; and I trust it will be followed up. If a University is to represent all that is best in the intelligence and skill of a nation, it can ill afford to neglect the Fine Arts. Let the great artist take refuge in isolation if he will, but do not force it upon him. For, indeed, his work, though he refuses to submit it to the popular suffrage, or to modify it by the opinions of critics, is an asset of civilization, a possession for ever; and his example is a model for all workers in its unflagging persistence and in its devotion to some of the greatest and best things that are attainable by the frailty of our human nature.

Gentlemen, I give you the toast of

'The Memory of Whistler'.

BURKE[1]

Of all great English prose writers, Burke is most like Shakespeare. If we had to state, in a few words, what it is that sets Shakespeare at the head of the great company of English poets, the task would be difficult (or perhaps impossible); but would not the answer have to be something like this: that no other poet combines the same breadth with the same intensity? Those who have something of the passion of Shakespeare are narrower in their outlook, more personal and exclusive. Those who have something of his width of view are usually more purely humorous or philosophic, less intimately concerned with the fervours and passions of humanity. Shakespeare alone never forgets the part in the whole; he is magnificent in his appreciation of the laws which govern human life, but he sees their remotest consequences, and illustrates them by their detailed effects on the life of the individual. He cares chiefly for the concrete, for living breathing human creatures, and he is never content to formulate a law without showing it in its real operation at the points where it touches daily experience and natural feeling.

In these respects Burke is like Shakespeare. His imagination has an immense scope, he deals much in general truths and laws of universal validity, but he is never satisfied with knowing the truth unless he can feel it and see it too—feel it in its operation on the life of man and see it in its humblest guise as it is exemplified in the habits and customs, the pleasures and sufferings of the English miner and the Indian peasant. He brought to the service of politics an imagination that would have given him high rank

[1] A lecture delivered at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in January 1908.

among dramatists and poets. In Goldsmith's well-known lines he appears as one

> Who, born for the Universe, narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.

But the sacrifice can be stated another way. He gave to politics all the vigour of his imagination, all the treasures of his observation and learning, and showed how, understood justly and liberally, politics are not a thing apart, but are coextensive with all the dearest interests of life. His writings have not the range of the drama. He handles no private matters, except in so far as these depend on public affairs. How intimately they do, everywhere and always, depend on public affairs has never been more clearly conceived than by Burke. He is the greatest and truest of our political thinkers. He has made it impossible for any one who reads and understands his work to give politics a place apart, to hand it over to politicians and economists and theorists as a partial and special study. Politics to Burke meant the life of man in society. There is no other life of man. His subject, therefore, is nothing less than humanity. The wonderful growth that is called the state, which no one man can design or construct; the pieties and affections which bind man to man, and make men willing to help one another; the blind force of habit and custom which are as much properties of man as mass and weight are properties of matter; the operation of positive law enforced by the State on its subjects, and the limits of that operation; the traffic of nations with each other,

> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,

and the interpretation and meaning of that traffic in terms of social and individual happiness; the vicissitudes and perils of societies, their rupture by internal differences and their clash in war—all these things are

a part of Burke's theme; to the consideration of them all he brings the accumulated riches of his study and all the extraordinary powers of his minute vision.

I do not propose to narrate the political life of Burke. It is a part of English history: he was statesman, orator, and writer. Perhaps it is not a misfortune that his life, judged by his achievements in practical politics, was not, on the whole, a successful one. If he had carried all his measures he would have run some risk of becoming a mere party leader and party idol. His failure has made him the possession of the nation. No party can claim a sole right in Burke. All parties can learn from him, even at those points where, judged by the light of later history, he seems to have been wrong in his anticipations. It is in his character as a writer that I desire to speak of him. And the part of his history that is of the deepest import in relation to his writings, is the part which we study by preference in the lives of all writers, the part which is often so obscure and impossible to be known—the early part, when he was making himself.

When he came on to the stage of action he had the enormous advantage which almost all great writers have enjoyed—he brought on to the stage a mind practised and enriched with long years of thought and study. Milton could never have written his great epic if he had not been 'long choosing and beginning late'. Hazlitt for twenty years of active life wrote for his livelihood, employing his pen on the subjects that offered under conditions very unfavourable to meditation. His writings are vigorous and brilliant and mature far beyond the wont of good journalism. Part of the explanation is to be found in a passage of one of his essays—*On Living to One's Self*:

'For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some

abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side :

> To see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year. . . . I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.'

Burke's mental history was like this. He was thirty-five years old before he entered Parliament. He was almost forty when he wrote his first political pamphlet on the affairs of the nation. His early years were passed in Ireland at a village school and thereafter at Trinity College, Dublin. He gained no College prizes or distinctions and trod no beaten path. He read enormously, in desultory fashion. 'All my studies', he wrote in his youth, 'have rather proceeded from sallies of passion than from the preference of sound reason,' and he describes how one frenzy of appetite for knowledge has succeeded another, natural philosophy, logic, metaphysics, history, poetry. When he was twenty years old he went to London to study the law, and thereafter we almost lose sight of him for ten years. His father, dissatisfied with Burke's doings, withdrew his allowance, and so after his marriage he was thrown upon literature for a subsistence. His first regular employment was from the bookseller Dodsley, who in 1759 founded the *Annual Register* and gave Burke £100 a year to write the annual survey of the chief political events of the year. At this time Burke was nearly 30 years old.

The meaning of all this is not obscure in relation to Burke's later writings. For many years he did nothing but think.

'Reading,' he said to his son, 'and much reading, is good. But the power of diversifying the matter infinitely in your

own mind, and of applying it to every occasion that arises, is far better ; so don't suppress the *vivida vis*.'

His own knowledge was all vital. He was prompted to his studies by ' the sallies of passion ', so there was no dead matter in his mind, and he no more forgot what he read than a man forgets his most exciting adventures. ' Political truth ', says Mackintosh of Burke, ' seems, as it were, to lie too deep to be reached by calm labour, and it appears to be only thrown up from the recesses of a great understanding by the powerful agency of those passions which the contests of politics inspire.' He applied what he read to every occasion ; he tested books by life, and found guidance in life from the transmitted experience of books. This live quality of his mind is seen in all his writings. He was a lover of poetry, and in his letters and speeches quotes the great Latin and English poets more frequently perhaps than any other politician has ever done. But his quotations are not dragged in to lend a touch of ornament to political reasoning. He never kept a commonplace book. They come unsought ; often they are unconscious reminiscences of his adventures among masterpieces. They are a part of his own mind, and express his own thought and feeling.

He had thought long and hard on political questions and the deepest problems of society. ' I did not come into Parliament ', he said later, ' to con my lesson. I had earned my pension before I set foot in St. Stephen's Chapel. I was prepared and disciplined to this political warfare.' He is alluding to the secretaryships that he held in his early years, and also to the enormous reading and study that he had from the first brought to bear on politics.

Not even genius could attain to Burke's style in oratory and poetry without the full stores laid in during the quiet years. ' Burke's talk ', said Johnson, who found him a formidable antagonist, ' is the

ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.' 'He viewed all objects of the understanding', says De Quincey, 'under more relations than other men, and under more complex relations.' . . . 'Under his treatment every truth, be it what it may, every thesis of a sentence, *grows* in the very act of unfolding it.' . . . 'Some collateral adjunct of the main proposition, some temperament or restraint, some oblique glance at its remote affinities, will invariably be found to attend the progress of his sentences, like the spray from a waterfall, or the scintillations from the iron under the blacksmith's hammer.'

It is this wide-searching figurative power, this remembrance of all the side issues and unseen effects, that makes Burke so great a political thinker. Politics is never a simple affair. Man, for all his weakness, is not a simple animal. We cannot reduce human problems to the plainness and certainty of the mathematics, or govern a household by the aid of a Ready Reckoner. The sure mark of a shallow politician is to be found in his forcible and delusive simplifications of the human problem. How familiar we all are with this easy line of thought, and how prone we are to follow it! Judge the wisdom of a politician by what he thinks of those who are on the other side. If he tells you that they care only for money, that they are eaten up with vanity, that they are bent only on dragging the name of their country through the mire—distrust him. These are not the conclusions of thought; they are incentives merely to blind action. It is as if men were afraid of understanding one another, lest they should cease to hate.

Burke knew that the attempt to legislate for society on certain broad and simple principles was a mere delusion.

'The nature of man', he says, 'is intricate; the objects

of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of his affairs. When I hear the simplicity of contrivance aimed at and boasted of in any new political constitutions, I am at no loss to decide that the artificers are grossly ignorant of their trade, or totally negligent of their duty.'

And again:

'Nations are governed by the same methods, and on the same principles, by which an individual without authority is often able to govern those who are his equals or his superiors; by a knowledge of their temper, and by a judicious management of it.... The temper of the people amongst whom he presides ought therefore to be the first study of a Statesman.'

Napoleon said, 'Men must be led by the bridles that are on them, not by those you intend to put on them'.

It is useless, therefore, to look in Burke for any statement of abstract principles of government. He did not believe that they exist: and fiercely opposed all who believed in them. Nothing universal, he said, can be rationally affirmed on any moral or political subject.

'Circumstances give, in reality, to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or obnoxious to mankind.'

To a member of the National Assembly in France he wrote disclaiming the power to advise at a distance:

'I must see with my own eyes; I must in a manner touch with my own hands, not only the fixed, but momentary circumstances, before I could venture to suggest any political project whatsoever. I must know the power and disposition to accept, to execute, to persevere. I must see all the aids and all the obstacles. I must see the means of correcting the plan, where corrections would be wanted. I must see the things: I must see the men. Without a concurrence and adaptation of these to the design, the very best speculative projects might

become not only useless, but mischievous. Plans must be made for men. People at a distance must judge ill of men. They do not always answer to their reputation when you approach them. Nay, the perspective varies, and shows them quite other than you thought them. At a distance, if we judge uncertainly of men, we must judge worse of *opportunities*, which continually vary their shapes and colours, and pass away like clouds.'

During Burke's century many political thinkers had devoted themselves to devising a science of politics. The misfortune was that the natural sciences, which alone could give hints of the right method to be pursued, were hardly in their infancy. On the other hand the mathematical and physical sciences, since the days of the early Royal Society, had advanced with enormous strides, and seemed to promise that all knowledge might be reduced to mathematical plainness and necessity; that politics might find its Newton or its Boyle, and attain to the infallibility of general statement and law without exception. An ambition of this kind fired the French philosophers and encyclopaedists. No one can read the works, say, of Voltaire without being struck by the hold that astronomical and mathematical conceptions have on Voltaire's imagination. Burke, throughout his life, passionately opposed such conceptions as applied to human society. *Plans must be made for men.*

'The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is . . . not to be taught *a priori*.'

He had not the scientific language which belongs to a later age; but he knew that Society is a living organism, and that its health or disease depends on the mysterious laws of life. Hence his life is a long series of attacks on all who would treat it in metaphysical or pedantic fashion, on sophisters, economists, legalists, believers in abstract rights.

'What is the use', he cries, 'of discussing a man's abstract right to food or to medicine? The question is upon the method

of procuring and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician rather than the professor of metaphysics.'

It is no uncommon thing for politicians to despise and dislike abstract principles in politics. If Burke taught this, so do the opportunists. There are many practical politicians who pride themselves on their exclusive attention to the immediate issue. 'Sufficient unto the day' is their motto. They are content with finding some sort of makeshift solution for every question when it is forced upon them. Until it is forced upon them they give it no attention. They capture votes and pass measures, and call this victory.

Burke was well acquainted with statesmen of this kind, who have flourished everywhere and always—have flourished and lived on the lips of men and then, unless their memory is preserved by some immortal blunder, have passed from office into speedy and final oblivion. The masterly sketch of George Grenville, who passed the Stamp Act, contains Burke's criticisms on this kind of character. He praises Grenville for his courage, his industry, his generous ambitions—all of which did not avail to save him from his epoch-making blunder. He had been bred in the law, and thence had passed straight into the work of official administration. The sins that beset the official and the administrator are well set forth by Burke in a few brief sentences.

'Their habits of office are apt to give them a turn to think the substance of business not to be much more important than the forms in which it is conducted. These forms are adapted to ordinary occasions; and therefore persons who are nurtured in office do admirably well as long as things go on in their common order; but when the high roads are broken up, and the waters out, when a new and troubled scene is opened, and the file affords no precedent, then it is that a greater knowledge of mankind, and a far more extensive comprehension of things, is requisite than ever office gave, or than office can ever give.'

Burke thought no better of the matter-of-fact official than of the theorist. A statesman, according to him, should not be bound wholly by precedent, nor wholly by doctrine. He should neither lose himself in the detail of office, nor commit himself to large universal theories which are forcibly applied in practice. He must take broad and general views, yet he must not forget the individual in the State. How is all this to be reconciled in a single mind? What is the nature of this comprehensive view of things which is necessary for politics? It is not philosophical: Burke rails against the philosophers of his own day. It is not legal: he hates the appeal to legality in great human crises. It is not economic: he conceives of economists at the best as servants not masters of political wisdom.

Burke has nowhere, I think, said it in so many words, but I believe he would have accepted the statement that for a just and true political outlook the qualities most necessary are those which are found in a great dramatist. The master faculty in politics is not abstract reason, but imagination. The great failures in politics are due, almost invariably, to poverty of imagination. A wide and live imagination, an enormous faculty of sympathy, the power to conceive many characters and to know how they will act in a given case, and all this held together by an ever-present sense of the great mysterious laws that govern human life—these things are essential for a statesman as they are for a dramatist. If you consider only the greatest of the leaders of men you will find that where they have failed (and which of them has not known failure?) it is often because the impartiality and sympathy of their outlook, the truth of their perspective, has been marred by egotism or passion, or dimmed by fatigue. Some have been lured by success into over-estimating their own importance and their power over human affairs, and have awakened with a

shock of surprise to find that they are not necessary to their party or their country. Some have been entangled in the machine ; they are so accustomed to measure the forces they have immediately to deal with that they forget the elements. They should be subtle enough to deal with things, simple enough to deal with men. The elector often thinks broadly, simply, directly: where the minister thinks in perorations or epigrams. Some have fallen victims to a fixed idea ; they have done the State some service in a particular way, and they attempt to repeat the service although the circumstances have changed, and a fresh review of the whole situation is required ; or they have repelled the enemies of the State, but their imagination from that time forward is possessed by these enemies, so that if danger advances from any other quarter, they do not see it. Politics are so large an affair that one man is hardly ever permitted to play many parts : the happy conjunction of the right abilities with the crisis that demands those abilities is not repeated. One man conceives a measure and another carries it out ; one set of men begins a war and another ends it. Those who succeed in remaining conspicuous on the stage in spite of all changes of scene generally maintain their position at the price of some loss of influence. In the large flow of things recriminations are useless : for one party to complain that another party has stolen its ideas is as if the spring should complain that the brook has stolen its water.

It would be easy to illustrate these remarks from the career of Burke as well as from his writings. He had little opportunity to be corrupted or put to sleep by power or office. But his hatred of theorists and abstract rights, which found such noble expression in his American speeches, somewhat falsified his view of the causes and nature of the French Revolution. If his imagination failed to grasp this unprecedented

event in all its complexity, no human imagination, one would say, could have succeeded at the same crisis. His view of humanity was not like a mathematical diagram: it was a coloured and moving panorama. Napoleon said: 'He who can carry in his mind most images is the man most gifted with imagination.'

'Burke knew', says Mr. Birrell,[1] 'how the whole world lived. Everything contributed to this: his vast desultory reading; his education; ... his wanderings up and down the country; his vast conversational powers; his enormous correspondence; ... his unfailing interest in all pursuits, trades, manufactures—all helped to keep before him, like motes dancing in a sunbeam, the huge organism of modern society. . . . The legislator devising new laws, the judge expounding and enforcing old ones, the merchant despatching his goods and extending his credit, ... the ancient institutions of Church and University with their seemly provisions for sound learning and true religion, the parson in his pulpit, the poet pondering his rhymes, the farmer eyeing his crops, the painter covering his canvases, the player educating the feelings. Burke saw all this with the fancy of a poet, and dwelt on it with the eye of a lover.'

To realize the wide bearing of all political changes or measures, to keep in mind what is unseen and does not express itself on paper in the office, asks for an imagination as vivid as a dramatist's. A new tax is imposed; its incidence is a matter of personal experience and personal emotion. The mere collection of a tax, which can be ordered by a stroke of the pen, is a business involving an endless diversity of dramatic situation and human perplexity. The first man who pays it can tell the statesman something that it is worth a statesman's while to know. A change in the law is made to achieve some plain end of justice: it carries with it all kinds of remote and unexpected consequences.

'The real effects', says Burke, 'of moral causes are not

[1] In *Edmund Burke, a lecture delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Society*, reprinted in *Obiter Dicta*, 1910.

always immediate, but that which in the first instance is prejudicial, may be excellent in its remoter operation ; and its excellence may arise even from the ill effects it produces in the beginning. The reverse also happens ; and very plausible schemes, and very pleasing commencements, have often shameful and lamentable conclusions.'

Burke's imagination led him to inquire into the remoter consequences of political acts. He was not content with the prospect of to-morrow's victory. He asked the question *What then?*—a question too seldom asked. His speeches on America show this power of political forecast at its brightest. There was no question that England had the legal right to tax the colonists. There was no question that England had the ships and troops to enforce her demand. But what then ? The Colonies were at one in their protest against the exercise of the right. Their temper was fierce and unyielding. Could that temper be altered by argument ? Could their shipping enterprises be restrained and the Colonies made unserviceable in order to keep them obedient ? Or must England take the high hand and prosecute the resisting colonists as criminals ?

'It looks to me', says Burke, 'to be narrow and pedantic to apply the ordinary ideas of criminal justice to this great public contest. I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people.'

The only remaining way was to recognize facts, to comply with the American spirit, and to do it with a good grace, fully and generously—not to reassert the right while remitting the actual taxes. Burke's wisdom here is simply (what it so often is) the wisdom of private life. No grudging and cautious concession was ever gratefully received by man or by state ; none was ever felt to be a concession. The temptation to triumph in legal argument even while giving way on the material point was the temptation to which the

British ministers yielded. It is a familiar temptation in private life. But these are triumphs from which wise men should refrain; they are cheap, and dearly bought.

'The question with me', said Burke, 'is, not whether you have a right to render your people miserable; but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not, what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I *ought* to do. Is a politic act the worse for being a generous one? Is no concession proper, but that which is made from your want of right to keep what you grant? Or does it lessen the grace or dignity of relaxing in the exercise of an odious claim, because you have your evidence-room full of titles, and your magazines stuffed with arms to enforce them? What signify all those titles, and all those arms? Of what avail are they, when the reason of the thing tells me, that the assertion of my title is the loss of my suit; and that I could do nothing but wound myself by the use of my own weapons?'

Another habitual exercise of Burke's imagination is seen in his habitual question—How does this matter appear when seen from the other side? What does it mean to the other party? His masterly sketch of American history and American character shows how profound was his understanding of this new and distant community. His speeches on the affairs of India, which he had never seen, take away one's breath by the vividness and truth of their imagery—as if he had the gift of second sight. He had only a wide and true imagination, working on the materials of patiently accumulated knowledge and recognizing the essential facts of human nature in their most foreign dress. When he came to deal with the French Revolution his knowledge was less intimate, and his sympathy less alert. It is true that he showed the insight of genius in predicting Napoleon. If the project of a Republic should fail, he said, that failure would make way for 'the most completely arbitrary power that ever

appeared on earth'. But Burke's view of French affairs was disturbed by passion. He had visited France in 1773 and had made acquaintance with the circle of the philosophers and political theorists; had heard polite infidelity talked in the salons, and had seen with violent alarm how the very foundations of the social system were questioned and discussed. When the Revolution broke out, he attributed it wholly to these theorists and sceptical thinkers. The French people became to him 'an armed doctrine'. But a whole people will not fight for a doctrine. The philosophers may have done the work of incendiaries, but the pile they fired was built up of age-long oppressions and age-long miseries. The state of the French people was very imperfectly visualized and imagined by Burke. He is at his best and most splendid when he is attacking the doctrinaires, but he gives no sufficient or discerning account of the fact of the Revolution. His writings on the French Revolution are rich in great precepts and counsels, true for all time; but the application of them is not always so sure. It is to be remembered that his political wisdom was severely tested by the most difficult problems of modern history. During the short period of his life two great political events happened which were without precedent—the Independence of America, the French Revolution. The meaning of the later and greater of these is still in dispute: its immediate effect was a reign of anarchy and bloodshed which justified all Burke's forebodings, and alienated even those who had hailed the movement in its beginnings as a new dawn. A severe illness sometimes leaves the patient better and stronger, but he would be an arrogant physician who should treat disease as his friend.

Burke's wisdom will never grow old until it has been accepted and followed in practice as a matter of

course. He teaches the elements of politics; and the nations of the earth are still his backward and careless pupils. All the problems that he had to face are in one form or another with us to-day. When he ended his speech on Conciliation with America there voted with him 78, against him 270. The doctrine of that speech has become a part of the creed of Empire, but it has not yet been so fully learned that it is secure against popular passion, national vanities, and moments of crisis. The state of things that Burke found in France, where the yeast of new doctrine, of equality and liberty, was working in an ancient and complex civilization, is reproduced to-day, with some strong likenesses, and some absolute differences, in India. It is easy to be wise after the event. The greatness of Burke is that he was often wise before it. Let those who are inclined to blame him because his wisdom was not infallible turn their attention to India and learn the futility of human forecasts.

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